The Green Hills Far Away

A Chapter in Autobiography

James William Barke

1940

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THE GREEN HILLS FAR AWAY

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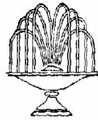
THE GREEN HILLS FAR AWAY

A chapter in Autobiography by

JAMES BARKE



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TO

BARBARA
MARY
AGNES
AND
JANET
IN MEMORY OF THE TULLIALLAN DAYS

We'll sing Auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bare the gree, as story tells,
Frae Southron billies.

At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,
Or glorious died.

O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary grey:
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms,
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light.
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
'Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The war'ly race may judge an' drive
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch, an' strive—
Let me fair Nature's face descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

From: EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMPSON, OCHILTREE, MAY, 1785, by ROBERT BURNS.

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PREAMBLE

BOW BELLS TO BONNIE SCOTLAND —via NIJNY-NOVGOROD

A FEW YEARS ago I had occasion to accompany on a quick motor tour through Scotland an English student of the film producer Pudovkin. He had been born and brought up in London but had just returned from a number of years sojourn in eastern Europe.

He was a Cockney by birth; but much travel and intensive study in the fields of philosophy, political economy and æsthetics had so modified the effects of his early environment that he was able to pass himself off as an almost denationalised Englishman of more than ordinary learning and ability.

We had much in common, were indeed brother soldiers on the philosophic and cultural front. Above all we had the basis of common language on which to build a common bond. We did not speak our mother tongue. He had broadened his clipped Cockney and had restored the letter H to its rightful dignity; I had shortened my broad Scottish vowels and I rolled my R's with a sense of phonetic proportion. The language we had acquired was indeed a form of English Esparanto: we approximated to a standard pronouncing dictionary. Now and again a native word or a native idiom would cause one or other of us to pause and ask for a translation; but on the whole our verbal intercourse was smooth and perfectly intelligible.

And yet we were foreigners to each other. There were many national traits and characteristics we did not share in common and had no wish to share in common.

We could talk intelligently about English, American, German, French and Russian culture. We had so to speak a common slant on affairs in South America, India, China and Japan. We shared a common pool of mutual knowledge, interests and enthusiasms that would have withstood a conversational drought for years.

But what amazed me and hurt me and often infuriated me was his colossal ignorance of Scotland and Scottish affairs. And to do him justice there was no one more amazed at his own ignorance than himself. Had he known as little about China as he knew about Scotland he would have been ashamed to have opened his mouth in intelligent company.

What notions he had about Scotland were grotesque and fantastic. No sooner had he crossed the Border than he had expected to see kilts and hear the skirl of bagpipes. He expected his staple diet would consist of some unheard of concoction of oatcakes and haggis—though he hadn't the foggiest notion of what haggis might be like.

Glasgow was rather a shock to him because he found Glasgow rather more beautiful and civilised than London—and he had been taught to think of Glasgow as the "cancer of the Empire." But while he was acute enough to accept Glasgow almost at a glance he could not think of Glasgow as being in any way characteristically Scottish. Glasgow was much more than a large industrial city. It had a rich communal life of its own. Here were groups of people who could discuss art, literature, music, painting, philosophy, the cinema—indeed what could they not discuss? And it was not merely a question of discussion—many of such groups were headed by men and women who were practising votaries of no mean ability and distinction.

There were slums—horrible slums. But London had slums more horrible. There was more than enough poverty, misery and starvation and filth and squalor and ugliness—but only so many drops in the bucket to London's quota.

Glasgow was a pleasant surprise—and something of a revelation. But still Glasgow was not Scotland. He wanted to see kilties and pipers and mountains and floods—something that might suggest Flora MacDonald and Bonnie Prince Charlie. There was Ramsay MacDonald for

example . . .

So we left the hospitality of Glasgow and went furth into Scotland. We went by way of Loch Lomond and Glencoe and the Caledonian Canal. We climbed up through Glen Garry down into Glen Moriston and Glen Shiel and on to Loch Duich. The majesty of the mountain scenery had almost numbed his ability to express appreciation. And it was with thoroughly malicious joy that I told him how here the great Dr. Johnson objected to the hills in that they obstructed his view. We crawled up Mam Ratagan, bowled merrily into Glenelg and explored the vitreous forts: by Dornie and Loch Carron and Gairloch; by Altbea, Dundonnell, Ullapool and Loch Inver we penetrated into the wilds of Sutherlandshire.

In the fantastic and almost incredible wilds of Sutherland I introduced my friend into the bosom of a Gaelic family. With honest scientific accuracy my friend referred to them as peasants; and thereby he committed an almost unforgivable social faux pas. Try how I might I was unable to convey to him the heinousness of his offence.

Here he met a girl of such incredible physical and facial beauty as almost drove him crazy. The cinema of Russia, Germany, Scandinavia, England or America had produced nothing in any way comparable to her.

She spoke intelligently of *The Blue Angel* and conducted some conversation in French. My friend was now floundering in a world of incredible fantasy. He began to rave. He was incredulous when I informed him that the girl had never seen a cinema and that here in the wilderness we were sixty miles from the nearest railway station.

He was a teetotaller: so I took a solitary nip of whisky to steady my nerves. I had begun to fear for him on the mad journey up—we had motored from dawn till dusk each day—now I thought he would go mad. I could sympathise with him. I had experienced the madness that Sutherlandshire can inflict on the imaginative.

Exhausted though we were we went out into the moonlight for there was no possibility of sleep—yet.

After an attack of gibbering incoherence his speech became more rational and I began to make sense of his words.

Just what kind of country was this incredible impossible fantastically beautiful Scotland? What was the real nature and character of the Scots? Whence came they? Where were they going? What was their history? What was their future? Why hadn't he been told of Scotland and the Scots? To what end and purpose had he been inculcated, in a superficial way, with all this balderdash of heather and haggis and whisky and "Mon, mon!" and "Hooch aye!"

At first I answered him patiently. I flashed back to some of the more important aspects of Scottish history. I explained the greatness and significance of the Battle of Bannockburn but took care to add that de Brus was an Anglo-Norman baron for whom no honest Scot gave a tinker's curse.

And then I became indignant, impatient and finally flew off the handle. In a paroxism of furious indignation I gave him a short but burning sketch of Scotland's history. I explained why Sutherlandshire was a howling wilderness in terms of the Highland clearances, extirpation and mass murders. I painted the history of Butcher Cumberland. I dashed the froth from my lips and ranted on the Galloway clearances and the herding of the majority of the Scottish people into the hell of the industrial belt.

And then I fairly went berserk on the Union of the Crowns and the so-called Union of Parliaments and accused the English of every vileness under the sun. We had poured out the best of our blood for England. We had enslaved our minds in the service of England. Without

the Scots there would have been no British Empire: without the Scots Britannia would never have ruled the waves; for England we had endured every conceivable kind of hardship and suffering. For our pains we had been robbed of our nationhood—relegated to the mere flunkey status of a northern grouse moor. We had been deprived of our honour, our glory, the light of our greatness in industry, science and the arts had been blacked out under the bushel of England's imperial ambition. Was not Edward the First of Great Britain and Ireland crowned Edward VII. of England . . .

The dawn was coming up and we crawled back to bed.

At Inveran later the same day, Angus MacPherson honoured us with a piobaireachd—*Glengarry's Lament*. My friend was moved to silence and wonder and awe.

In a chip shop in Inverness we sat and discussed the Marx brothers. At this time I had never even heard of them for they had not reached the Caledonian fastness. Here my friend regained some of his composure and I resigned myself to sanity.

We sped down the Great North Road discussing the passing of quantity into quality and the interpenetration of opposites.

But it was no use. We deviated and went over by the Devil's Elbow into Braemar, wound down into the Carse of Gowrie by way of Blairgowrie, battered our way through the Sma' Glen and took it easy by devious ways across the Ochils.

I showed him the rolling pastoral plains of Clackmannan, Kinross and Fife and told him that here in very truth was my native land—the broad acres of my nativity.

But by now he was beyond speech and sat slumped in a numbed awe.

We returned to Glasgow exhausted by the ordeal of eight hundred miles of Scotland's beauty and fifty hours of Scotland's history.

Refreshed by sleep and rest we sat down at the fireside for a last talk and a recapitulation of our recent experiences.

Scotland was a small country but it had an incredible variety of incredible scenic effects. The variety of national characteristics amply reflected the variety of natural scenery. The bareness of its moors, the desolation of its glens, the loneliness of its loch shores was compensated by its richness elsewhere in fertile straths, generous carses and coal and iron fields. Against the foot-plough of the north-west Highlands stood the dour but unchallenged world supremacy of Clyde shipbuilding. In contrast to the ancient and inadequate transport ferries of the north-west was the engineers' miracle of the Forth Bridge.

We agreed, he as travelled sociologist and artist and I as parish pump but discriminating enthusiast, that Scotland had fine potentialities for being one of the most glorious of the smaller countries. Its physical characteristics could be fully enjoyed by a race that had enormous potentialities for industry, art, learning and commerce.

We had to use the qualification of potentiality. The Scots possessed in a great measure all the attributes of a highly civilised race. But their attributes were rotting away or frustrated. What was needed was the dynamo of emergent nationhood geared to a scientific national economy, to save them, free them, and set them moving in harmonious human activity. We discussed the possibility of Scots engineers (civil, hydraulic, electrical, mechanical) sweeping away the remnants of feudalism—tapping, bridging, harnessing the wealth of the nation; the old seats of learning inspired by the renaissance of scientific learning broadening, sharpening, illuminating, inspiring the Scots mind; resurgent art freed from its bonds and blinkers warming, enthusing, ennobling, unifying the soul and the heart . . .

It was a grand vision. All the grander for being as capable of realisation as boiling an egg.

A YANKEE UNHAPPY IN HAMPSTEAD

Shortly after this I was in the company of a young American novelist who shared my world outlook. He had, to his own amazement, been awarded one of those prizes eccentric American millionaires bequeath or donate on the most eccentric conditions. One of the conditions of this prize was that the winner must spend it in Europe or Asia and was compelled to live furth of the U.S.A. for some year or eighteen months.

My American friend had got stuck in London and was bored to death with the English. They were too phlegmatic for his dynamic temperament.

He sensed at once that I was not English. What was I then? My speech was not Irish.

I confessed I was Scottish. Alas, this conveyed little or nothing. I was different from the English. I was (it seemed) more vital, more direct, more considerate, and a darn sight less polite. Was this characteristic of the Scots?

I asked him to tell me what the name Scotland conveyed to him. He ruminated for quite a time. I tried to help him out. Had he ever heard of Loch Lomond? He shook his head. Glasgow? Well yes: he had heard of Glasgow but had never quite thought of it as being in Scotland. Now, when he came to think it over, he rather thought it must be.

No . . . he had rather thought of Scotland as a grim, barren, poverty-stricken country—a very small insignificant part of Britain sparsely populated by fierce, ill-educated, and mean peasants. Didn't they wear kilts or something?

And bagpipes, I interrupted—what about them?

But no: he had never heard of bagpipes.

"You see I was educated—that's what they called it—in Chicago. Pretty soon I was trying to earn a few dimes. Yea—any darn thing."

Sometimes between dime earning, starving and looking for a place to sleep, he read an odd book. Even if there had been any books on Scotland lying around he wouldn't have been interested (American publishers take care that the American public won't have any chance of getting the low-down on Scotland.) He was interested in politics and economics and world affairs and religion and philosophy. He was sorry. But I knew how it was.

Anyway: what the hell! He was clearing out of England before he choked with moral asthma. He was heading for Paris, Berlin, Moscow. I knew how it was. He was mighty glad for having met a real guy from Scotland. If he'd any time on his way back from Moscow or Berlin he'd look in on Loch Lomond. What the hell! Maybe Berlin wouldn't be so hot when he hadn't German. He liked the way I spoke English. Maybe he'd come up with me and spend the rest of his vacation with those Clyde engineers and shipyard workers: he could do with meeting some real guys. Yea: he knew Hampstead wasn't London. But you never knew what an Englishman was thinking.

Our mutual friend was a brilliant linguist: he bore a grand Scots name, had been born in U.S.A., educated in China, finishing off in Berlin and Paris. He strongly advised the American prize-winning novelist not to miss Scotland. If he were compelled to stay all his life in one city he believed he'd choose Glasgow. The countryside around it was the finest in the world.

But we had other things to discuss: The New Deal, Father Coughlin, Mike Gold, Theodore Dreiser, dos Passos, Langston Hughes . . .

SCOTLAND THE BRAVE

It had been borne in on me for years that, outside of Scotland and the Clan and Scottish societies of the Empire and America, Scotland was no more than a name. Even the late Ramsay MacDonald who liked to think of himself as being Scottish was seldom taken at face value: the world knew of him as the English Prime Minister. Sir James Matthew Barrie's rare visits to his native land were seldom recorded outside the Scottish press—which was perhaps as it should have been.

It is rather curious and surprising on the superficial face of it. Scotland which has done so much for the British Empire has not achieved anything like the world fame of Ireland.

All the world knows the Irish. Even Bernard Shaw who was only Irish by the accident of birth (and who indeed is English of the English) is universally known as the most brilliant and witty of all the brilliant and witty Irish. But the Scots have not been able to retain one of her greatest sons, Walter Scott: he stands a landmark in English literature. And though *Auld Lang Syne* reverberates round the world we have only been able to retain Robert Burns because he wrote in the most foreign of all foreign languages—Braid Scots.

The truth is—the Scots have lost their nationhood. Maybe the first stage was when Calum of the Big Head married an English queen and Anglicised the Gaelic court. Or maybe it was when the Anglo-Norman adventurer Robert de Brus defeated the Scotland of William Wallace and, after double-crossing his Southern friends, routed them at Bannockburn and planted the Scottish Crown firmly on his own head. The fact is that 1314 led to the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when Jamie the Saxth of Scotland became James the First of Britain and went south of the Border, never to return. A further decisive step that led to Scotland's loss of her nationhood was the Union of Parliaments in 1707, against the overwhelming desire of the people. The Scots made their last physical stand in 1745 on Culloden Moor and drained their blood on the heather.

After that came Butcher Cumberland and General Wade. Scotland was brought firmly to heel and ruthlessly subjugated to the rule of the dominant partner. The industrial revolution completed her death and transfiguration from nationhood to the province of North Britain: a combination of grouse moor and shipbuilding yard with a few lengths of tweed, a gallon or so of whisky and a ricketty 'Scotch' comedian or comic singer thrown in.

The Anglicisation of Scotland proceeded apace with the growth of industrialisation. Very soon appeared a type of Scot, the finished product of this Anglicisation. He knew nothing of nationhood and he strove to obliterate his nationality. The more ambitious of them went south of the Border or over the seas. The type is characterised by such figures as Ramsay MacDonald, J. M. Barrie, Andrew Carnegie, Hector MacDonald, R. L. Stevenson, Frederick Lamond . . .

It was the common people of Scotland—ploughmen, farmers, fishermen, coal miners and the like—who did not completely lose their sense of nationality. Indeed, considering the terrific forces of coercion and propaganda brought to bear against Scotland, it is surprising that the sense of nationhood has not been completely wiped out.

The English press barons control her public prints: her houses of entertainment are saturated with the culture of Hollywood. A culture so potent and vigorous that Elstree cannot modify it. Her educational system is thoroughly Anglicised. The broadcasting apparatus is designated as 'regional.' (Over this regional apparatus a piobaireachd is broadcast about once a year!)

Hardly anything of native Scottish culture survives. Writers, musicians, poets, painters and scientists who would be true to their deepest inspiration and faithful to their most valid experiences have to fight a grim battle of misunderstanding and neglect.

There is not a genuine native Scottish artist who has not to depend for his livelihood and success on the favour of English critics. Gone indeed are the days of English bards and 'Scotch' reviewers.

Now English critics are kind and generous and their intentions are almost always honourable. They are, often as not, extravagant in their acclaim of 'regional' Scottish culture. They are not to be blamed for the fact that they are English. And since the brand of home critics are but their pale (and often puny) echo it is not to be wondered that the Scots artists are glad of the attention the English critics so generously bestow on them.

But the fact remains that the English critics are, to the native Scots artist, English critics. He often wearies for his artistic birthright—the praise and censure—above all the understanding—of the native Scottish critic.

For there is something about the Scot—his combined racial characteristics—that differentiates him from his English brother and sister.

True there are not so many Scots now in Scotland. The denationalisation of the Scot has gone both deep and broad. But if the Scot is to survive as an integrated being, if he is to add something to the storehouse of world culture and human learning—if Scotland is to add her shape and line to the patchwork quilt of human brotherhood (and my case is that the quilt of that ultimate human brotherhood will be all the poorer without her distinctive contribution), then Scotland will have to regain her nationhood and base her institutions in harmony with her deepest historic and racial characteristics and go forward to her enrichment (and the greater glory of mankind) on that basis.

The cultural products of Fleet Street and Hollywood and regional broadcasting are turning sour in our stomachs. As a staple diet it is deficient of essential national vitamins; and without the vitamins of national integrity and self respect we are doomed to spiritual dyspepsia, mental malnutrition and physical decay.

The signs of these grave disorders are indeed heavily upon us.

THE TARTAN BANNER

In writing this first chapter of my life I have been moved by one dominant idea: to present essential elements as may cast some light, however unsteady and unclear, on my native country and on the native Scot. There is no other excuse: need there be any other justification?

There may be bitterness in this record: there is much to be bitter about; there may be gratitude: there is much to be grateful for; but there is no arrogance: for there is nothing to be arrogant about.

But I must warn the reader that here I can only present the tiniest facet of Scottish life and character. Scotland is a small country of some four million inhabitants. But the variety of characteristics is symbolised in our tartan.

Many and rich and strange are the threads woven into our national fabric: more vivid the hues.

There is the ancient Gaelic-speaking Galloway Scot of the Kingdoms of Fergus and Allan. To this royal Gaelic blood has been added the rich strains of the pure Celtic Irish potato-digger. There is the Border Scot and his lineage goes back (stopping short of the Stone Age) to the Saxons and the Danes and the Celts of Northumberland. There is the east coast Scot and in his blood flows elements from the Norse, sundry European sea reivers and the ancient Pict—

whoever he may have been. There is the Hebridean Scot; but whether he is Scandinavian or Irish it is difficult to say. There is the Highlander or mainland Gael—a blend of Pict, Irish Celt tinctured with cast-away Spaniards (Iberian Celts?), English packmen and itinerant Jewish pedlars. There is the Scot of the Ancient Kingdom of Fife, the beggar's mantle fringed with gold. Maybe he is the purest Scot of them all. He is Celtic, Pictish, Gaelic, Saxon, Dane and Scandinavian and maybe (with his Baltic trading) Russian, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian; and from the settlements of Polish miners he has gained something it would be difficult to appraise . . .

Second in importance is the Edinburgh Scot. He is the heir of the capital that is no longer a capital but a damned and lost bourach of a place, cold and draughty and hollow inside—not inadequately summed-up as East-windy, West-endy. The Edinburgh Scot is almost too fushionless to be analysed. He has no real national present; he cannot conceive of a future; and the past hangs around him like the smell of decayed fish manure.

Most important of all is the Clydesdale Scot. He has come from all the airts of Scotland. He has even returned from Ulster where he was settled after the Battle of the Boyne. And with him have come many thousands of his southern catholic brothers—the Boyles, Doyles and O'Raffertys—and thus, in due course, a Mr. Patrick James Dollan becomes a Lord Provost of Glasgow.

But there he is, the Clydesdale Scot—dynamic even in his poverty, ignorance, superstition and malnutrition. And this Clydesdale Scot, because of the peculiar significance of his historical conditions, is the most glorious Scot of them all. It is he who supports (often on his physically stunted shoulders) the whole burden of the industrial belt. Naturally he is afflicted with many of the sores and running wounds of modern industrialism; too often does he bear painful evidence of the stunting produced on his forebears by the industrial revolution.

But he has also been hardened, toughened, experienced and educated for the special tasks history has ordained for him. For it is the Lowland Scot, but pre-eminently the Scot of the industrial belt, who will lead Scotland out of her present industrial and agricultural and rural chaos into the free and prosperous and happy Scotland that will yet, must yet be.

Many Scots have had their own visions of this future Scotland. William Power describes in his *Should Auld Acquaintance* a vision that finds a ready response in almost all Scottish hearts:

> "That dream will come true when the children of the housing schemes, reading of the Scotland of their fathers, will want to link up their lives with the national tradition and to move out from their swept and garnished settlements into the real Scotland. These grey suburbs, gim-crack and featureless, cannot be the continuing city of the Scottish race. They are the first halt in the wilderness, where those who came up out of the Victorian Egypt will muster for a further advance. When they go up and possess the land the vital rhythm of national life will be restored.
>
> "These things shall be. I had a vision of them when, as a boy, looking out from a high window in a Glasgow tenement, over wet roofs and smoking chimneys, to doleful Port-Dundas, I hummed an old Jacobite song and sensed a new prophetic meaning in it:
>
> *O this is no my ain hoose,*
> *I ken by the biggin o't,*
> *For bow-kail thrave at my door-cheek,*

And thristles on the riggin' o't.

A carle cam wi' lack o' grace,
Wi' unco gear and unco face,
And sin' he claimed my daddy's place,
I downa bide the triggin o't.

Wi' rowth o' kin and rowth o' reek,
My daddy's door it wadna steek,
But bread and cheese were his door-cheek,
And girdle-cakes the riggin o't.

> "The magic of Orpheus is no mere myth. Scotland is sung about; therefore it exists; and its existence, which I discovered through Scottish song, helped to assure me of my own. In our old songs there is a magnetic power that has held Scotland together and that will rebuild it. It is a uniquely permeative mode of the power of the Word, of literature, associating itself with family affections, love affairs, bereavements, partings, reunions, holidays, merrymakings, interesting people, and all kinds of cultural study. Scarcely anything of consequence happens to a Scot that does not bring to his lips a verse from the Bible or some lines of an old Scots song. I can fall in love with any country that has a good song-literature; and since my own country has perhaps the richest and most distinctive song-literature in the world I can be excused for loving her."

It is a grand vision. But it lacks, like many visions, any realist perception of how the vision will come to pass in the flesh and blood and material of human achievement.

In the meantime I have thought it expedient to record, after a fashion, my experiences of the Scotland I knew and loved as a boy. This record has a personal value (it may even have a literary value): whether it will have any value for future historians and sociologists time will tell. If it heightens in any way the love of my fellow Scots for our native land, rids our English brothers of their hooch-aye-complex and indicates to the hypothetical foreigner something of Scotland's real background, I shall be more than satisfied: indeed I shall be wildly delighted. For in a war of overwhelming odds any defeat, short of annihilation, is a potential victory.

I
THE BACKGROUND

THE ESTATE

I REMEMBER nothing of my Border birthplace. As my parents were Gallovidians, and had only stopped for a few years migratory toil in the Borders, the geographical aspect of the nativity may be considered accidental: certainly irrelevant to these pages.

My boyhood years were spent on Tulliallan Estate, on the borders of Fife, Clackmannan and Kinross. And it is of those Tulliallan years, 1907-1918, that I write.

"Heaven," said Wordsworth in a moment of near-inspiration, "lies about us in our infancy." Mothers who have tried to fit a gas-mask on an infant may not be inclined to agree. But if heaven does not lie about us in childhood, it cannot be said to be about us at any other period of our allotted span. And much depends on environment and the circumstances conditioning infancy. My own infancy lay in the pre-gas-mask era.

The emotions evoked by nostalgic contemplation of the past are seductively potent. The result of indulgence is the disease backward-looking backward-longing. When the past is filled with delightful memories it becomes easy to fall a chronic victim of the disease. It is not a state produced by "emotions recollected in tranquility." Here the evocation may be controlled and healthy. The disease lies in the continual brooding on the remembrance of things past to the exclusion of the present and preparation against the future: hence a resultant stultification of the will.

Much backward-longing is for things in themselves rotten and decayed. Simple material things like a rotten gate on rusty hinges; a muddy, ill-constructed pathway; an insanitary well overgrown with ferns and green with mosses and lichens; horn spoons and wooden platters; peat fires; hens roosting on the spars of the kitchen table; thistles growing on the thatch roofs of damp cottages; the wasteful burning of good logs in wide open grates; the squire on horseback or riding to church in his carriage and pair with the booted and cockaded postillion decorating the rear . . .

The thousand and one facets of a past social life are brooded and mulled over till only the picturesque reflection remains. From all this is born the sick longing for the past and the indifference, if not dissatisfaction and hostility for the present. Ultimately a paralysis creeps over the will leading to a deathly inactivity, a senile somnambulance, a letting drift and slide of things pertaining to contemporary practicalities.

Many artists have fallen a prey to this disease; and it has vitiated and corrupted their artistic validity. But the disease is not confined to artists: it corrupts politicians and philosophers; it enervates the man-in-the-street.

It is not to be inferred that the past is all rottenness and decay: tritely, the past is the present of the future. From history which is the record of the past man learns some of his most important lessons. Only from an understanding of the past, often the very ancient past, can he evaluate the present and consciously influence and, in given circumstances, actually pre-determine the future.

But history is not the concern of the backward-longer. In cities, and large congeries of men, where changes are more rapid and custom less enduring—especially in times of rapid social development—the stone, concrete and iron does not provide a propitious soil for the backward-longer. It is in the country, in the quiet places, in the villages and hamlets where custom alters little and the habits of the past endure that the soil is most propitious.

An old gate rotted and green, mossed into its background of mossy wall, is undoubtedly, from a visual aspect, a more satisfactory object of contemplation than a brand new article garish

in its coat of fresh paint. And old social customs, such as never casting a clout till May be oot and the washing of the face in the May morn's dew have more association-poetry about them than five a.m. tennis and grapefruit breakfasts. And it does not necessarily follow that a modern innovation is better than an old custom because it is modern. There are many excellent people, possibly running into tens of millions, who have never had a bath since they were babies—I can vouch for many of my own personal acquaintance. But neither does it follow that the bath and all-over washing is an unpicturesque modern innovation—an evil excrescence of the plumber's art.

Though less evil in its effects, the snobbish vice of modernism is no less objectionable than its antithesis. There are artists who cannot bear to contemplate anything older than ten years: so that sometimes an art-form (really an art-fashion) changes between spring and autumn. This upstart eschewing of the past, this snobbish desire to be in advance of the herd—especially the herd of fellow-artists—is almost always sterile and ephemeral, leading to the bizarre and the unintelligible.

The only sane and realist view is the one that regards society as a growth. And growth is a many-sided movement embracing the twinfold interaction of decay and development. It is from this point of view that I endeavour to write: to see in the past the movement towards the present.

So there is a minimum of subjectivity in this record. It is of no interest to know when any one cut their first tooth—unless this natural function had an unnatural or unusual significance. Sentimental meanderings in the miasmic maze of imagined childhood are as profitless as they are usually tiresome. It is almost invariably a sign that the ego has become rotten-ripe.

And yet "I remember, I remember," strikes a healthy and responsive chord in most of us. Whether or not our clouds are glorious albeit we trail them.

In the early memoirs of the rich and fortunate, it is not unusual to find much loving detail expended on descriptions of a pleasant house and a pleasant garden. I count myself fortunate that, in Tulliallan, I had nine square miles of magnificent Scottish country in which—with certain restrictions—to live and have my being.

From *The Topographical, Statistical and Historical Gazetteer of Scotland*, of 1848, the following interesting and succinct information is culled:

> "Tulliallan, a parish in the detached district of Perthshire; bounded on the west and the north by Clackmannan; on the east by Culross; and on the south and south-west by the firth of Forth. Its greatest length from north to south is 3 miles; its greatest breadth is 3 miles; and its superficial extent is about 2,760 acres. The surface has a gentle slope from the northern boundary to the Forth, and is highly improved and cultivated. The soil is various, and consists of clay, rich loam, and sand, lying on till or rock. Woods are comparatively extensive, and give the district a warm and ornate appearance. The Forth, where it touches the parish, is from 5 furlongs to 2¼ miles broad; and has a coast 3¾ miles in extent. On its margin in Tulliallan are the town of Kincardine, and the ancient village of Longannat. Some 30 or 40 pans for the manufacture of salt have all, long ago, been demolished. From the west end of the parish to New Pans the shore is level; and thence to the extreme east, it abounds in rocks which are bare or covered with the alternation of the tide. Coal exists, and is worked. Tulliallan castle, one of the seats of the Baroness Keith, stands upon a small rising ground about half-a-mile from the Forth. The castle which it succeeded, and

> ruins of which exist, belonged to the Blackadders, knights baronets, and appears to have been a place of strength. A considerable lake lies in the centre of the parish; and a small one is situated on the eastern boundary. Most of the local interest, and of the facilities of communication, belonging to the district, have their centre in Kincardine. Population in 1801, 2,800; in 1831, 3,550. Houses 567. Assessed property, in 1815, £5,824. Tulliallan is in the presbytery of Dunblane, and synod of Perth and Stirling. Patron, Lady Keith. Stipend £259/3/9; glebe £44/10/-. The parish church was built in 1833, at a cost of about £3,500. Sittings, 1,176. An United Secession meeting-house in Kincardine, belonging to a congregation established in 1813, was built in 1819, at a cost of £1,200. Sittings about 800. Stipend £132, with manse, offices and garden. An Original Burgher meeting-house in Kincardine, belonging to a congregation established in 1813, was built in 1816. Sittings 470. Stipend £85. An ecclesiastical census of 1836 exhibited a population of 3,536, distributed into 2,392 churchmen, and 1,144 dissenters. In 1834 parish school was attended by 147 scholars; and 7 private schools by 311. Parochial schoolmaster's salary £34/4/-, with about £50 fees. In 1659, part of Culross was, by authority of the Court-of-Session, annexed to Tulliallan."

In the sixty years from 1848, Tulliallan Estate had altered little. Here and there was evidence of decay—the croftings of Damend and Praybrae had gone out of commission and the water wheel that drove the sawmill lay in ruins. But to off-set the decay there were now filtering tanks, water on tap, and electricity. Much planting had been done and the estate had been improved in many ways. Money had never been tight around Tulliallan, and Sir James Sievewright was as prodigal with it as any of his predecessors.

Indeed there was often a shameful wastage of money and labour on Tulliallan, and periodically endeavours were made to off-set this by economies in the wrong direction. An accurate costing system would have revealed many illuminating facts: the comparative cost of a cabbage and a calf would have revealed the difference between extravagance and economy.

The first fourteen years of the twentieth century certainly saw the hey-day of Tulliallan Estate. Under Lady Keith it had grown to a ripe maturity: Sir James Sievewright nursed and preserved that maturity, little thinking of the destruction and devastation that lay ahead.

The estate then was beautiful: beautiful in a variety of ways. It was sheltered and secluded and within its area encompassed a variety of effects: moorland, pine forest, mixed timber, fresh water lochs, a variety of dams, ploughed fields and tree-studded grazing parks. It was possible, at Bordie Moor, Praybrae or the Keir, to feel a thousand miles away from civilisation. In the depths of the forest it was possible to feel the extremes of loneliness and isolation. At the home farm, Windyhill, it was easy to accept the atmosphere of a farming community, with its stack-yards and stables and clouds of sparrows. You could walk on the bank of the Forth that ebbed and flowed with the North Sea tides and feel that a great river flowed to the sea.

The grey ribbon of the Forth was one boundary to the estate. The other was the great swelling paps of the Ochils. They did not constitute a rateable boundary, of course; but they dominated the northern horizon. Without the natural framework of the hills, Tulliallan would have been very different: they gave it background and perspective: they were a focus for the uplifted eye.

At the westward end of the Ochils, standing on the proud crest of Abbey Craig, was the Wallace Monument. The Wallace Monument was much more than a physical focus-point: it was the spiritual symbol of the Scottish race and brought Tulliallan within the battle orbit of

Scotland's history. Indeed there were those who asserted that the bore stone at Bordie marked the site of one of Scotland's most significant struggles.

The monument was a constant reminder (if I needed one) to the fact that I was a Scot; that William Wallace was our greatest national hero, a hero who had struggled for our national independence at the head of the common people and who had been betrayed into the hands of the English by the Scottish nobles.

Every time I lifted my eyes to the hills they rested on the Wallace monument; and I thought of William Wallace. For I grew up with much of the history and most of the legends of Wallace. I seemed to acquire this knowledge with the air I breathed, for I cannot remember being consciously taught about him.

There he stood on the flank of the Ochils, Sentinel of the Carse of the Forth. But he stood apart from the hills, as was proper; and the hills were mostly green and their soft swelling contours caressed and soothed. But they did not belong to Tulliallan: they constituted the external boundary of the physical world.

My parents had been cheese-makers in Galloway. Now my mother was dairymaid to Tulliallan Castle; and though my father soon became dairyman, he started his Tulliallan days as an estate worker with the foresters.

There were two dairies: a working dairy adjoining the factor's office, and behind, in a corner of the rose garden, was the model dairy, a cool, hexagonal building with latticed windowings, rustic porch, and, inside, marble and tiles and a plashing fountain. The working dairy was more prosaic; but the electric churn and the electric milk separator possessed a magic of their own.

We lived at Blackhall, the administrative centre of the estate. Here were the electric power station, the dairy, the dairy byres, the poultry, the stables and coach-houses, the granaries (my father attended to the hay-chopping, corn-bruising and cake-crushing machines), the joiner's shop and the factor's office. The head gardener, the factor's clerk and the coachman lived on the Square. Round the corner, below the Square, where a patch had been cleared in the wood, we lived beside the hen-wife and the estate carter.

It was a two room and kitchen, semi-detached building, with a range, a sink (the w.c. was round the back), and electric light. The big room was the same size as the kitchen. The wee room was just big enough to swing a cat in. The front windows looked out into the wood across a patch of green: the back window looked out into the garden.

But it was a warm comfortable house of its kind and of recent construction. The hen-wife's house, running at right-angles, was a rambling structure in comparison.

The Blackhall community was secluded and isolated and sufficient unto itself. Though Kincardine Cross was little more than a mile from our doorsteps, and in winter-time we could glimpse the red-tiled roofs through the bare branches, we never thought of ourselves as villagers.

As I passed my boyhood on Tulliallan estate my interest in it was never an adult one. I knew (in a speculative sense) little about its politics or its economics. Indeed I knew nothing about economics or politics. I did not speculate as an adult, as some children are known to do; and there was nothing precocious about my intelligence or knowledge. But Tulliallan was beautiful and I was sensitive to physical beauty: it was possible to live a life of isolation and seclusion there and I was instinctively anti-gregarious. But though I was anti-gregarious I was far from being anti-social. Tulliallan had more than a normal quota of worthies, characters and bodies—and I had a keen if discriminating love for people of strong or quaint individuality.

I was well-fed, warmly clothed and adequately housed. Compared with the average lot of

the average boy of those years I lived a life of comfort if not of pampered indulgence. And yet I knew the meaning of hunger and want, privation and suffering: was conscious of the awful gulf separating the rich from the poor. I knew by direct experience of the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. But this experience, though it was deep and real, did not cloud the summer of boyhood.

When I consider how millions of children are brought-up in Glasgow, New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Yokohama, Bahia Blanca and Valparaiso, there is no doubt that I was pampered, that I was fortunate beyond the stars of highest heaven in my environment. And maybe it takes all kinds to make a world—and to change it.

The Scots are a quiet race of people. As they read the pages of their history they must often hang their heads in shame and horror and disgust. But just as often they can hold their heads high. There was William Wallace and Robert Burns and Iain Daill MacKay and Donald MacLeod. There was even that old sycophant Wattie Scott with his revolutionary history-making Waverley novels; and Neil Gow with his fiddle . . .

In the heart of the Scot lies sorrow and joy, action and inertia. His brain broods like an eagle on the cold pinnacles of science and his blood drums with the deep joy of lust. As the world goes his land is poor and his climate wretched. But he lives on. He consolidated the British Empire and builds the finest ships that sail the seven seas. The English hate him and sneer at him: the mighty Americans when they care to notice him, which is seldom, do so with the faint flush of interest reserved for the utter nobody. The rest of the world cannot be said to know him apart from the odd individual foreigner who has heard of him as some quaint, neither very funny nor very important, hoary joke.

No matter. Maybe England will have an attack of imperialist indigestion and Hollywood go phut before we are finally corrupted off the map. In the pages of the Record of Man's Achievement the Scot figures more honourably in relation to population than any other race. The world can laugh that off as and when it likes. It can skip it or let it lay.

I would rather have been born a Scot than a Turk or a Pole or a Prussian (or an Italian). I am glad I was not born an Englishman. Yet such is the glory of William Shakespeare I am glad that (after my fashion) I read and write and speak the English language and not another. I find in myself no trace of racial hatred of any kind. I dislike, on personal contact, many members of the Jewish race—especially the rabbinical business type of Jew; I dislike most Englishmen—especially the broadcasting Oxford type of Englishman. I dislike many of my fellow Scots—especially certain Presbyterian business types and degenerate West Highlanders and Hebridean, so-called, Gaels. In short I have my acute and less acute personal likes and dislikes much the same as other mortals. But of racial hatred I know nothing. And as I cannot hate Jews I cannot hate Englishmen. I can never forget that if Robert Burns was a Scot, William Shakespeare was an Englishman, Beethoven a German, Ibsen and Strindberg Scandinavians, Tolstoy a Russian, Jesus Christ a Jew, Galileo an Italian, Cervantes a Spaniard, Rabelais a Frenchman, Van der Meer a Dutchman, Theodore Dreiser and Paul Robeson Americans, Confucius a Chinaman, Sean O'Casey an Irishman . . . Maybe I would rather take my Burns and my bagpipes on a journey to the End of Time. Maybe I'd rather sit in the outer darkness for a million light years if in the end I could hear Toscanini conduct Beethoven's Mass in D. Maybe: for I will never be called upon to make any such choice. But there can be no fanciful doubt about my love for Scotland which is as broad as the Carse of Gowrie, as high as Ben Nevis and as deep as Loch Morar. And of Scotland I would rather have been born and brought up in Tulliallan than any other spot—Glenelg, Achiltibuie, Achmelvich, the Dowie den of Yarrow, the

Brig o’ Turk, the Brig o’ Ayr and the Brig o’ Dee not excepted. For however broad and catholic may be the cosmopolitanism of my culture I still retain enough parish-pump pride to fill an asylum for paranoiacs.

THE VILLAGE

The village, as it stands now, is a depressed and derelict remnant, severed by main roads and junctions serving the new Kincardine Bridge spanning the River Forth. But in those days it was a quiet dreamy place with a character and a distinction of its own. John James Millar who was a native of the Hill-foots, and who often carted stones through the village from a nearby quarry, has written in his autobiography that you could have fired a double-barrelled gun in the main street on an afternoon without the risk of injuring anyone. The worthy John James (and indeed he is one of the most remarkable men in Scottish letters) does not here exaggerate.

I must have seen John James many a time passing through the village and along the Kilbagie road, heading for Alloa. I certainly heard of him. For he was a powerful man and could wrestle and toss a caber with the best. Donald MacLaren, whose play *It Looks Like a Change* is one of the richest gems of characterisation in Scots drama, once told me that he had a conversation with John James in which he denied any knowledge of Keats. “But,” he added: “I can go through to Alloa there and put a valuation on a head of nowts and write a poem about it at the same time: and a poem, mark you, that folk will read.”

But though John James was born and brought up in the shadow of the Green Hills, and though he had an intimate knowledge of the village and the district generally, he does not, alas, properly belong to these pages.

It may be a defect; but I do not warm greatly to the study of subjects specialised in by the antiquary and the archæologist. Yet I must confess I have often felt the lack of an adequate social grasp of the history of my native village. That it had an ancient and worthy history was plain to anyone who walked through it. Many of the houses were obviously of eighteenth century construction. The walls of many were probably much older. The roofs were invariably covered with large concave red tiles of a style long since gone out of manufacture. They were a fine mellowed shade of terra cotta, contrasting favourably with the garish red tiles of the modern bungalow schemes.

There had been no plan about the building of the place: it had just grown. The houses had been built here and there, reel-rall, sometimes gable-end to gable-end, divided, now and again, by crooked wynds and narrow closes. They huddled about the pier, straggled round the green, dandered along the Alloa-Dunfermline roads, meandered up the brae towards the Auld Kirk and breasted (rather bravely and perhaps more recently) the brow of the Toll Road.

The Toll Road, the high road to Dunfermline, was immortalised in a local bairns’ rhyme:

The Campbells are coming, Jock Todd, Jock Todd:
Get oot the back window and up the Toll Road!

There was a vast literature of bairn and folk rhymes in the district. A study and analysis of it would be of the greatest interest and instruction and would probably explain much that is obscure in the history and character of the West Fifer. But for the most part they are richly and uncompromisingly bawdy; and so, unfortunately, from the present moral standards governing our printing and publishing (standards that do not differentiate between smut and that genuine

healthy naturalism which is as the red corpuscles to the blood-stream of literature) they are deemed obscene and are therefore outwith our printed consideration. It is true we never approached *The Ball of Kirriemuir*—that ballad above and beyond all other ballads. I have heard of nothing that can even remotely compare with its gorgeous and invigorating naturalism or its wealth of surging, riotous and grotesque imagery. But we were Scots and heirs to a glorious tradition: and if we did not raise our standard to challenging heights we did not allow it to trail in the dust.

But to return to the village. In the past it had been prosperous with its industries. It had built ships: it had spun ropes: it had mined coal. It had engaged in clay-craft: indulged in lime kilns and boasted salt pans. Even in my day its fishing smacks were busy drawing caller herrin' frae the Forth: to say nothing of flounders and cod and lesser fry. But even then the fishing was repeating the sad story told in many grim and dreary chapters along the Scottish coasts: every year more and more boats going out of commission.

It is true I was not greatly concerned with all this at the time for my chief interest was the Estate. But I could not shut the village out of my life entirely. There was contact with much of its life through church and school and the necessity of shopping.

For those who may care to read something of its history, the 1848 *Gazetteer* supplies an interesting note.

> "Kincardine, a considerable village and seaport on the north shore of the firth of Forth, in the parish of Tulliallan, in the southern detached part of Perthshire. It overlooks a contraction of the Forth to a width of 5 furlongs, and has above it no part of the firth wider than a mile. It is distant 5 miles east from Alloa; 4 west from Culross; 22 south from Perth; and 25 north-west by west of Edinburgh. Some salt-pans which originally impressed on it a characteristic feature, and which amounted, in 1780, to fifteen in number, imposed on it the name of West Pans; but these long ago disappeared, and allowed it to assume its present less vulgar, and somewhat appropriate name.[1] The houses of the town, except in the old parts, are, in general, neat and substantial, two and three stories high; but they are, for the most part, collocated into such narrow or irregular street-arrangements, as, in spite of the aid derived from the vicinity of some good villas, and of a fine new parish-church, to exhibit a tout ensemble not very prepossessing. The kirktown or village of Tulliallan, is a suburb of the town, situated on its north or inland side. The port, with the exception of Leith, is one of the most considerable on the Forth. So far back as 1786, it had 91 vessels of aggregately 5,461 tons—an excess over Alloa, at the same date, of 200 tons. But it afterwards suffered depression; and though it rallied, and has on the whole thriven, it is far from now exhibiting a fruition corresponding to the fulness of its early promise. The number of shipowners is at least 50; but it is hardly an index to the amount of commercial importance which the place possesses, but rather an indication of a fondness which the principal inhabitants—in common with those of Kirkcaldy and some other second-rate ports—have to possess property in sea-craft. The shipowners constitute among themselves a company for insurance against individual losses at sea; and, in 1839, had a capital in vessels of £70,000. The trade of the port extends to the shores of the Baltic, to those of the Mediterranean, and to the West Indies and America; but it consists chiefly in the exportation of coals to places not far distant, and in the importation of Russian and Swedish produce. The quay or

> pier, built by the voluntary contributions of the shipowners, is good; and opposite to it is a roadstead capable of accommodating 100 vessels of each 300 tons burden. Two steam-vessels ply across the firth, conveying carriages and cattle, and otherwise serving as a facile succedaneum for a bridge; performing the passage in five minutes, and attaching importance to the town by opening a main line of communication direct between Glasgow and its dependent towns, and the whole district of Fifeshire and Kinross. Ship-building is conducted to a very noticeable extent, so many as 9 or 10 vessels being occasionally at one time on the stocks; but it is confined chiefly to the construction of coasting vessels. In the town are a brewery, and works for making ropes and sails. In the suburb of Tulliallan is a distillery. Weekly markets are held on Wednesday and Saturday; and an annual fair is held on the last Friday of July. The town has branch-offices of the Glasgow Union bank, and the Commercial bank of Scotland. Two meeting-houses belonging respectively to the United Secession, and to the Original Burghers, are situated here; and the parish-church stands in the suburb. Kincardine is a burgh-of-barony. Population, about 3,200."

A town built in such a reel-rall fashion (and yet withal couthily bigged) could not but house many genuine characters. But the bodies there were a kittle crowd and the stranger who thought to meddle with them invariably came off a poor second best. There had been a great deal of inter-marriage down the years and this, together with the national custom of producing a subsidiary crop of illegitimates (and the village was always well to the fore with its tillage of the extra-marital soil) gave rise to a throughither relationship. There were usually a few auld wives, in the crannies of whose wrinkled minds reposed the involved genealogical details and cross references of the village and the surrounding district. When there was a fall-out among the bodies themselves there could be, and generally was, a rare washing of dirty linen—to say nothing of an airing of questionable bed blankets.

It would be easy, of course, to see nothing here but back-biting, mean and narrow spiritedness, envy, hatred, malice and all manner of uncharitableness. But of all this I think we had no more than our due share. There was also joy and laughter, kind heartedness, hospitable liberality, some downright sobriety and much honest drinking in the half-dozen inns and public houses—a fairly generous accommodation of hostelries in relation to the population. And where the Houses of God, established and dis-established, can nestle in the same hollow of the land with the Free Houses of Man, we can be fairly certain that the religiosity of the people will not be too rigorously strait-jacketed in the confines of conformity.

Bigots and sectarian asses there were; and dullards and fools and knaves. There were gossips and shrews and the usual coteries of female scandal-mongers. There were lewd and profane people with little respect for the decencies of social convention and intercourse. There were timorous respectable people, continually haunted by the fear that they might not be doing the right thing. There was a hooligan scum and a flotsam and jetsam of general riff-raffery. Our village was no Sweet Auburn. It was much like any other Scottish village—a pretty fair amalgam of Kinraddie or Barbie; Ecclefechan or Auchtermuchty. Take the village bodies as you found them: they were as douce and decent as any to be found in broad and bonnie Scotland.

The village bodies were proud and properly disdainful of the great cities of the world: rank and wealth and title meant little to them. Their instinct, their deep intuitive sense of human worth was sound and healthy. They had no knowledge of the wormwood and gall that makes the fruit of success so bitter and unpalatable: or of the terrible loneliness that walks with the

truly great ones of the earth. Most of them would rather have gutted herrings than have been the Lord Provost of the City of Glasgow (to say nothing of the Lord Mayor of London): and I cannot but think the better of them for that. Their lives, perhaps, were narrow and circumscribed: but they did not need to drag their souls through the dirty puddle of so-called public life.

It was a dying village when I knew it. Apart from the fishing, it lacked any industry of its own. The salt pans had long vanished: the stocks of its shipbuilding yards were little more than barnacled stumps sticking out of the mud: the rope work was in ruins. The bodies found work in the Kilbagie Paper Mill, the boat-yard or the bottle works in Alloa; and a minority, as colliers, in the neighbouring pits.

But the decay of the village was slow and almost imperceptible. There was nothing spectacular in its long drawn out death agonies. And for the most part the bodies dozed away in a dull, decrepit kind of way. They were contented for the most part. There was little evidence of great suffering or deep despair.

Its life belonged to a Scotland that was slowly passing away. Indeed that Scotland has passed away and the soul of Kincardine with it. Like many another worthy point where good Scots were born and lived and died, it has had no historian to record its passing.

By the time I went to school—and long before it—education was moulded by Sasunnach influence and domination. And though the worthy dominie of Tulliallan Parish School did a not unheroic best to counteract much of the Sasunnach influence, he was not a native of the countryside, and we were taught nothing of the history or significance of our parish. We were told about Newcastle coals and the guano of Valparaiso: no one thought it worth while to tell us that ships had been built and sailcloth woven a stone’s throw from the playground.

Nor were my folks able to enlighten me. They were strangers to the parish. From them I got the history of Galloway. So that I came to look on Kincardine with a strange eye myself.

About once a month I made an excursion into the very heart of the village. There was no employment for the full-time services of a barber. But Sandy Baldwin, when he was not working at the paper mill, cut hair and for all I know indulged in a little shaving in his back room. Sandy was a great bird fancier and the walls of the room were lined with bird-cages housing linnets, red-poles, finches and canaries. The remainder of the furnishing consisted of a bench and a chair. Sandy was no tonsorial artist, though he may have owed something to the topiarian. He sat you down on the chair, flung a sheet round you and ran the clippers over the poll, back to front, with the minimum number of movements; so that, saving the small tuft he left at the front, you were shorn into the wood.

As the inclusive charge for this service was three halfpence, and I was always given tuppence, there remained the halfpenny change to be disbursed as I might think fit. There was a sweetie-shop window in the High Street that displayed a selection of chocolate fishes, birds and animals. I was sorely tempted to purchase a chocolate flounder. But as I did not know whether a halfpenny would cover the cost, and I was too shy to enquire, I invariably went home and threw the coin under the kitchen bed. Such few odd coins as came into my possession were always thrown there, for I had no use for money—unless there was a craze for spinning peeries or playing bools, or knitting reins with changing coloured wool. Then I might rescue a penny from under the bed and commission my sister to make the desired purchase.

And yet, though I never came to know the village with the intimacy of a native, it lay on the fringe of my world and I came to have a very deep affection for it. Now that it has been so sadly mutilated in its old age, now that its life and character has all but ebbed away, that affection has

grown with the years into a mellowed love. For it was something more than just a Scottish village. It had character and history. There must have been a brave exhilaration and a stirring sense of high adventure about the life of its hey-day. Strange and mighty tales must have been told in the village inns: tales of Turks and Russians and the medley of strange folks along the shores of the Baltic—and this against a background of farming, distilling whisky and poaching game on the Tulliallan policies. Running through it all the talk of men from the Highlands making for the Lowlands, and merchants from the Lowlands penetrating into the North.

True, strong drink is a mocker. But there comes a time when man's instincts and emotions require the mockery of wine. And there is no more potent wine, no more certain mocker than the barley bree: the native whisky of old Scotland.

I have never tasted Kilbagie whisky (although I have seen advertisements of it in obscure hostelries), nor, so far as I know, any of the blends from the distilleries of the Tulliallan district. I may have supped it with sugar when I had a cold for my mother was a strong believer in the medicinal properties of good whisky.

The good life, the healthy life, the sane, reasonable life and the most admirable life is the one that is lived without the aid of any fermented (or excisable) liquors. This at least I know above and beyond anything else I may know. But I would give much to have drunk strong Tulliallan whisky with the ancient men of Tulliallan. I should have loved the great drunken gossip of the Kincardine hostelries . . . gossip from the ports of four at least of the seven seas; and to have heard from lips loosened with that golden nectar of the exploits of poachers and men who loved women greatly and who sang the bawdy ballads of the parish.

Even as a boy, treading with an evil excess of shyness the quiet village streets, I had glimmerings of the warmth of human comradeship that blossomed behind the trim doors of the village inns.

Looking back across the years I often feel I should like to shut the doors of the world against some half-wit and his band, all manner of broadcasting, all manner of cinema, all the horrible nausea that arises from the stench of moralities, and open wide the doors leading to the dead world of fishermen, miners, boat-builders, ploughmen, salt-panners, sailcloth and rope makers, and all the strange and glorious bodies who lived around and in the Parish of Tulliallan and under the red-tiled roofs of Kincardine and who met, warmed by the effects of Tulliallan whisky, on the common level of the common humanity of the Scottish race.

A man cannot know his fellowmen till he has worked with them, fought with them, hated them, loved them, slept with them: sorrowed with them and endured with them. Even then there is something he will never know until he has drunk with them. And of no men under the sun is this more true than the men of Scotland.

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[1] "The word *Kincardine* is of Gaelic origin, and is said to mean 'the Head of the shore.' As applied to the parish described in the preceding article, and lying West of Stirling, it countenances the generally received hypothesis, that the upper carse of the Forth was, at one time, the bed of a continuation of the firth. The town we are now noticing, possibly occupies at present a similar relative position to the firth, to that which belonged to the parish-church of Kincardine-of-Menteith when it received its name."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

There were many rich personalities about Tulliallan: many colourful characters. True they were apprehended through the romantic eyes of childhood. Some were probably shoddy enough creatures whose masks I was unable to penetrate. Even so I see no reason to deny them the benefit of any doubt and to remember them as I found them. Some, unfortunately, cannot be written about: the laws of elementary decency, if not the law of libel, prevent. I say unfortunately: for there are not many of us who can tolerate a joke against ourselves, however good the joke. And I am very loth, wittingly, to offend the memory of those who added to the joy and wonder of life in those days.

George Fyfe was a character. He was a wag and a wit and a very forceful and forthright individual. He lived about Clackmannan somewhere and was employed on the estate in the capacity of a general labourer, specialising in drain digging and ditch clearing. He had a sharp lean strong-boned face and a powerful physique. My mother and he enjoyed many sallies together: they appreciated each other.

One morning Geordie was digging a drain in the court opposite the gardener's house. Jock the Plumber was there with his blow lamp and solder, ready to repair the burst water pipe. There were a few others present enjoying a crack when the gardener came out—complete with bicycle, Norfolk jacket and 'plus twos.' The gardener would have liked to have ignored the group, for Geordie had just passed a ribald remark intended for his ears. He was compelled to stop and pass the time of day with them. This suited Geordie who, knowing his general unpopularity, immediately made him the butt of his remarks. The gardener, who was inclined to be parsimonious, was lamenting the high cost of living as a consequence of the War. Immediately Geordie seized on this as a text for disparaging the saving of money in particular and all manner of parsimoniousness in general. What was money that it should be regarded as the be-all and end-all of existence? There were many more things of importance in life besides money: love and liquor for example . . .

As this was only talk it could be ignored with a certain amount of graceless disdain. And then Geordie played his master stroke. He stuck his pipe in his mouth and leisurely produced a ten shilling note from his waistcoat pocket. This he displayed with a casual indifference before he carelessly folded it into a squill, leaned out of the trench and ignited it at the flame of the blowpipe.

There was a gasp at this: but Geordie calmly lit his pipe, threw the burning note into the trench and extinguished it with his foot. The sight of ten good shillings going up in smoke was too much for the gardener. He mounted his bike and rode off.

The others, while admiring Geordie, thought him a little foolish. But Geordie had the laugh on them all. Probably he was the only one of them who knew that a note could still be negotiated provided the serial number was intact. When they were gone he retrieved it from under his foot and smiled quietly to himself.

Jock and I once enjoyed an afternoon with him cleaning out the burn that ran from the Moor Loch to the waterworks. He stood in the middle of the burn in a pair of thigh boots and was armed with a long-shafted draining tool. It was a dreich job and Geordie welcomed our company. He cross-examined us very carefully and elicited much useful information. It was useful to Geordie in a variety of ways to know as much of other people's business as possible. But Geordie was not mean. In return he regaled us with some scandalous tales delightfully spiced with his own highly individualised blasphemies and profanities.

As we worked slowly up the burn in the heat of the July afternoon we soon became conscious of the presence of wasps. And then, hanging from a branch that swept over the burn, we espied the wasps' nest. We pointed this out to Geordie. But he wasn't to be intimidated by a mere bunch of grey-looking paper, no matter how many wasps it harboured. Nonchalantly he raised his trenching tool and swept the hive from the branch. Hardly had he done so than a wasp stung him, with great (if unintentional) accuracy, on the very tip of his nose. Geordie let out a great roar and sprang from the burn. We didn't need to be told how painful a wasp's sting could be and though our sympathies went out to him, we could not refrain from laughing at his antics and his truly comical appearance; for the point of his nose, in a few moments, had swollen to the size of a golf ball. Naturally Geordie did not think that the occasion merited such laughter and he gave us such a round cursing that we deemed it advisable to leave him, and his swollen nose, in peace. The incident was perhaps of no great moment: but it so appealed to our sense of the ridiculous that once we were safely out of hearing we lay down on the grass and rolled in helpless merriment.

A very different character was George Michie. He was perhaps the most authentic character about Tulliallan. He was certainly the most celebrated and was a great favourite of Sir James Sievewright. George was the stock breeder at Windyhill. He hailed from Aberdeen way and his speech was rich in the amazing idiom of that countryside. To the Fifer, especially the West Fifer—whose dialect is perhaps the least beautiful of the Scottish dialects—George, with his Aiberdonian twang, was properly considered a foreigner. A man who asked 'fareegain?' for 'whaururryegaaun?' was almost outside the pale of civilisation.

My father certainly considered George outside the pale. But for a very different and more cogent reason. George had a pedigree calf born with four legs and six hooves. The extra pair of hooves were very small and situated immediately above the normal forehooves. The freak displeased George and the calf was a valuable one. As he saw no way of removing the offending hooves by themselves, he removed the front hooves at the first joint, arrested the bleeding with a liberal application of tar and bound the amputated stumps in sacking.

The calf did not thrive very well after this operation and it was at this point that George called in my father for his opinion. Not that this was done officially. Officially George was a master at his job while my father (who was indeed an expert) was considered to be a mere layman: at least in his early days at Tulliallan. My father listened quietly to George's tale and inquired, with a touch of incredulity, what good might be thought to lie in amputation.

George looked at my father contemptuously:

"Damnt, man: if ye get them airly enough they'll grow new ains."

George was the dirtiest and most untidy man I ever saw about Tulliallan. His invariable appearance suggested that he had just risen from a sleep in the dung midden. Indeed there is every reason to suppose that was where he did sleep on occasion—especially when overcome by the effects of whisky—for which he had a powerful thirst.

His cap was always perched on the back of his head retaining its position in some miraculous way. His boots were seldom or ever laced—indeed I doubt if they had always laces—and the bottom of his trousers were invariably tucked into his open boot-tops. He had a flat broad face of a yellowish-grey colour, probably due to lack of soap and water. Apart from a bushy moustache and even bushier eyebrows the general face area seemed to be unduly hirsute, suggestive in this respect of some species of ape or baboon. But indeed his whole aspect and appearance was strongly simian.

George was evidently a great wit and was very popular with the visiting gentry and the big-

wigs at the cattle shows. Sir James showed him off as his prize specimen. But for all that he wasn't too popular with his fellow-workers—if George could be said to have fellow-workers. For he was in all things a law unto himself and not even the factor could do much with him.

He had the most homely habits which he may have brought with him from his native Aberdeenshire. In his kitchen, on a shelf near the door, sat a large flat basin of milk. The rim of this basin was a favourite roosting place for his fantail pigeons. It may have been that the flavour of the milk was improved by their droppings for neither George nor his wife sought to disturb them.

I seldom saw him other than at the head of an enormous prize shorthorn bull. They made a picture. George's slow rolling gait suited well the ponderous waddle of those enormous pedigree bulls with their impossibly short legs. They travelled at little more than a mile an hour and even this slow pace seemed to exhaust them. They were ugly and useless-looking brutes, requiring manipulatory and mechanical assistance in the performance of their stud duties. But they were valuable and occasionally won prizes and so gave George many legitimate excuses to get royally drunk.

I have a picture of him on his knees on our kitchen floor endeavouring to drink from a cup of tea placed on a chair-seat and my father telling him to drink it up so that he might be sober enough to get home to Windyhill and so avoid falling down on the roadside and going to sleep. It was quite common for the carters to find him lying in a drunken stupor at seven of a frosty winter's morning, his very hair frozen to the ground.

Even Sir James encouraged him in his drinking. Many a time when he was conducting a party round the byres at Windyhill, he would drop his flask on a bunch of straw so that George could pick it up after they were gone and enjoy a dram. Probably Sir James did not grudge the money the byres at Windyhill cost him, counting the wit and the company of George well worth it. Latterly when anything went wrong with the pedigree stock—which was frequent—they were sent down to Blackhall to be cured. My father had many a sore night with them and my mother many an anxious time with their suppurating teats. But it is certain George never lost a night's sleep over them—if indeed he ever gave them a moment's thought. But withal George was a real character and Tulliallan would have been a duller place without him. His style may have been peculiar and in some respects rather objectionable. But it was his own style and he altered it for no man.

But who was not a character around Tulliallan? There was Willie MacKay, the coachman: a Sutherland Highlander, an excellent piper and a very fine gentleman (even to his aptitude for doing no more work than he could get away with). My mother had the natural Lowland dislike for Highlanders. She considered them cunning beyond foxes, two-faced and given to all manner of double-dealing and double-crossing—as much so to their own kind as to those who had not the Gaelic. The fairer they were to her face the more she suspected them. Nevertheless she got on well enough with Willie MacKay and Calum Finlay and John Menzies and she had quite an affection for young Calum MacIntyre: and they were all as 'Highland as Mull.'

I myself had always a great affection for Willie MacKay and listened to his piping with wonder and delight. One of his sons, Roderick, was a splendidly set-up fellow, a natural aristocrat of great dignity and charm. In his prime he succumbed to paralysis under the most tragic and heart-breaking circumstances.

The introduction of the motor car robbed Willie of much of his usefulness and towards the end of his term he was sorely degraded in status. The last straw was the cleaning of the hen-houses. This was a job that had always been done by a labourer but, due to War scarcity of

labour, there came a time when it was difficult to get anyone to do the job. Mrs. Hunter, the hen-wife, saw the factor and suggested that my father would be a suitable man for the job. When news of this reached my mother, she raised such a hornet's nest about the factor's ears that he was glad to give in. The next man suggested for the job was Calum Finlay. Calum was furious when he was ordered to clean and whitewash the hen-houses: his dignity was undermined: his manhood insulted. But a job was a job, Highland pride or no Highland pride.

At the end of an hour he revolted. He might have managed to swallow the insult to his manhood: but he'd be damned to everybody about Tulliallan if he would suffer the acutely personal indignity of hen-fleas. And bedamned if Calum did: breathing fire and malediction he shook the dust of Tulliallan from his shoes and the fleas from his body and thus dramatically brought to an end many long years of honourable service.

Willie MacKay was appointed his successor. The humiliation was very real. That Sir James Sievewright's coachman and piper should be reduced to cleaning the estate hen-houses was indeed a bitter pill. But whereas Calum had no responsibility beyond earning his own bread and butter, Willie had many obligations to fulfil. And so the hen-houses were cleaned—albeit in gall and bitterness.

Perhaps Roddy felt the insult more keenly than anyone. Sitting helpless in his invalid chair, against the sunny wall of the engine house, he fumed and fretted. My mother, who had the greatest admiration for Roddy and was deeply grieved at his tragedy, always stopped and chatted with him as she proceeded to the afternoon milking. That afternoon she found Roddy in sore distress.

"It's telling them that I am lying here helpless or it's no hen-house about Tulliallan that my father would be cleaning this day. There are those who should be cleaning hen-houses for they are fit for nothing better; but no: they are too respectable, too reverened. But they can degrade my father . . ."

When at last he knew that his days were short and there was no betterment for him, Roddy plagued his father for medicine: a tune on the pipes. It was the only medicine that was any good to him. But I doubt if his father had much heart to administer it.

Willie Peetie was the one character about Tulliallan who remained, for us boys, an enigma. He was the shepherd. Not that there were a great many sheep about Tulliallan. But when Sir James was in residence a sheep had to be killed and dressed once a week. This job was also part of the shepherd's duties. We used to watch him kill and dress the sheep in the boiler-house beside the byres where my father sometimes boiled a feed for the pigs.

Peetie was a tall square-built man with a red beard then becoming streaked with grey. He was by far the most unapproachable man about the estate and was of a rather grim taciturn disposition. I cannot remember him addressing a solitary word to us. It was our habit to stand at the boiler-house door and watch him truss, kill, skin and dress the sheep.

He went about the task quietly and methodically. The method of killing was by bleeding. He thrust a knife through a part of the neck, severing the main blood vessels. The blood gushed into a zinc pail and we were surprised to find that a sheep could bleed to the extent of a pailful. It must have been a painful death for the sheep, and it was this part of the proceedings we liked least. The two sheepdogs waited patiently for the two titbits that were always thrown them. What small organs they were given we never knew, but they were always the same—a different organ for each dog.

Peetie suffered from a complaint he described as bowls of wind, and he would sometimes be found lying behind the hedge rolling about and groaning with the pain. It was Geordie Starkie

who first told us about this. Geordie and his sister, Barbara, ran the croft of Crosshill and supplemented their income with a cheap delft float—exchanging a few cups and saucers for old rags, bottles and sundry scrap metals. The first time Geordie saw Peetie suffering from one of his attacks he thought he had taken leave of his senses. Peetie was rolling about in the middle of the loaning that ran past Crosshill. In winter time the loaning was dirty and muddy as it was on this particular day. But Peetie seemed to be insensible to the mud and the mire. It was only when he heard the frightful groans that Peetie was emitting that Geordie realised that he was more ill than mad and went to his aid.

I confess that the first time I saw the shepherd in somewhat similar circumstances, I took to my heels . . .

Hosts of minor characters crowded the Tulliallan scene. Jenny Forest, a sharp-tongued, sharp-featured field worker from the village, who invariably wore a coloured bandana and looked like a gipsy or a Spanish peasant. She had a rare vocabulary of the more impolite expletives and was never afraid to speak her mind with boldness and asperity.

Johnny Stocks, an ancient worthy, who assisted about the byres. He should have been pensioned off ten years previously for he was very old and frail and almost impossibly bow-legged. Perhaps his legs were not really bowed so much as they had stiffened and bent with age and years of hard toil. For all that Johnny had his wits about him and as his normal gait was a half stoop—'twa-fold' was how my mother described it—he had only to stoop an extra inch or two in order to peer through his legs and see what was going on behind him. When traversing the court, Johnny would stoop several times to pick up an imaginary straw in order that he might observe what was going on. Sometimes when he went to feed the pigs and he was burdened with two heavy pails of feeding, they would crowd upon him and knock him in the midden. I do not know what his weekly earnings were—possibly not more than eight or ten shillings—but it would have been charitable to have given him his few shillings by way of pension.

But if Tulliallan was a treadmill for many people, for others it was something in the nature of a rest home. As in all walks of life, there are people who make a fine art of shirking their responsibilities. Especially was this so with the tradesmen who came about the estate. I cannot say I ever saw Sandy Scotland, the joiner, sweating with the exertion of his labours; and Jock the Plumber spent many a happy hour with Davie Crichton the engineer. There were others too, whose fondness for a dram led them into many a queer ploy. But though I witnessed many riotous scenes arising from over-indulgence, they were on the whole of a happy, if boisterous, nature: certainly I saw no evidences of brutality or sordidness arising from it.

II
GLIMPSES OF CHILDHOOD

THE HEARTH RUG

WITH A HOOK, a piece of canvas and a bundle of rags, my father made a hearth rug. I lay and tugged at some of the brighter coloured rags, safe behind the bastion of a high planished steel fender. A fire roared in the range: it would be winter time. Mother would be at the milking, leaving me in charge of my sisters. Beyond the rug lay a cold sea of waxcloth. I would withdraw my hand from its coldness like a kitten touching water. Beginning to creep.

Mother would come in from the milking about six o'clock and lift me up and hug me and give me a drink of milk. The rug, the fire, the fender and the strong sure arms of my mother: nothing else existed.

The miracle of condensed recapitulation: nine months in the womb. But what æons were exhausted on that rug.

MIDGES

Midges: but no conscious knowledge of them. Toddling around the door the following summer. Blackhall could be plagued with midges. Maybe not as bad as Fort Augustus or Tomdoun in Glen Garry or Achiltibuie. But bad enough to cause me to scratch till I bled. Then the strong maternal arms again—and hot water and carbolic soap.

THE MAN WITH THE GULLY KNIFE

The summer waxed and the world extended. The road was some thirty yards across the green from the door. Gathering up the dust in heaps, letting it run through the fingers.

David Crichton, the plant engineer, passed up and down from his house, the main lodge, to the power house. But he passed unnoticed. Then John Roxburgh, a visiting plumber, came with him one day. Jock the Plumber was something of a wit and a wag: withal a cheery fellow. He sees the child with the golden curls playing in the roadway. He stops. The child wonders. A strange, unfamiliar being has become manifest. Here is something beyond the strong arms of the mother. Jock produces an enormous gully knife and demands a golden curl. The child runs off in fear, crying for the protective arms. The world no longer comprises only the circle round the hearth rug. There are strange and sinister beings in a world beyond.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

The world rapidly becomes more and more complex. It was a custom then for kindly souls—or persons maybe wishing to ingratiate themselves with parents—to give curly-headed boys a penny.

Whence came the knowledge that a copper coin could be bartered for goods there is no remembrance. But soon Curly finds himself surrounded by a group of inquisitive people at the Bridge Inn, half-way into Kincardine. And when the highly inquisitive bodies of the village enquire his business and his antecedents, he reiterates that he has a penny and wants to buy a bicycle. The proposition seems quite rational.

And then someone pushes through the crowd and hoists him on to his shoulder and carries him back to an anxious mother.

So the world is peopled with kindly strangers as well as ogres with gullies.

THE BEARDED LADY

The child trusts or distrusts the stranger intuitively and often with a sharp sense of discrimination. Nor is the child born with a complete sense of social taboos. “Man was born free,” said Rousseau: “everywhere he is in chains.” This is an important half-truth.

My mother is standing on the path in front of the door talking to a strangely dressed woman, heavily veiled. The child considers she is strangely dressed since he has never seen a woman dressed in the fashion of the lower middle-class before. But more strange, more fascinating: the woman’s veil conceals a beard!

I show my inquisitiveness with all the persistent naturalness of the child. My mother vainly tries to push me into the background. When she is gone I am severely reprimanded. But I am puzzled and hurt—and still curious. Perhaps my mother thought there was something vaguely obscene in offering an explanation for a woman’s beard.

I have often wondered since why this unfortunate and intelligent woman did not shave—or at least in some way denude the growth. She must have had a very uncomfortable time when, travelling to Edinburgh during the War, she was arrested before crossing the Forth Bridge as a spy! Presumably bearded spies were not in the habit of shaving when changing into female attire.

THE SHORN LAMB

The mass of reddish-golden curls must have been considered a great asset. They aroused considerable comment: and there is a distinct remembrance of much uncomfortable head-patting.

Around the fourth year of their glory, I took a scone and syrup to the hearth rug and ultimately fell asleep using it as a pillow. This didn’t do the curls any good. So my father sat down on a chair, gripped me between his thighs, and snipped off the curls. My sisters seemed unreasonably distressed. I was relieved that I began to look like other boys.

THE KILT IS NO DELIGHT

Having got rid of the curls—which had no doubt outlived their usefulness—I began to organise a campaign to get rid of my kilts. The kilt has its uses: but they are largely ornamental. The kilt restricted my growing freedom of movement. Besides, the two other Blackhall boys, John and David, two years older than myself, were offensively ribald in their comments. Their chant, in unison: “Kiltie, kiltie, cauld bum . . .” was by no means the most offensive.

My mother, thinking to frighten me, threatened me with moleskin trousers. But moleskin—of which I knew nothing—held no terror. A sister was packed off to John Chalmers, the draper in Kincardine. When she returned the moleskins were produced with a triumphant flourish

intended to exorcize the fear of the kilt. I whooped with joy! Regretfully my mother was won over. Except for Sundays and other dress occasions I said good-bye to the kilt.

STRIFE

By now I was beginning to spread my wings and extend the boundaries of my world. I was taken to the Square to the dairy byre to watch the milking. It was around midsummer. 'Twittering' swallows swooped out and in the byre door to their nests on the high rafters. It was a small, high byre with eight concrete stalls. There were six or seven cows in the byre.

The milking was interesting: but it soon began to pall. Then my mother got me to hold a cow's tail to prevent it being swished across her face—which, as I was soon to discover, could be very painful.

While holding the cow's tail I watched my father pouring out some milk into small pails for the calves. Possibly the calves had the scour—anyway the milk was carefully doped with medicine. I watched him fetch a bottle from the trough of an empty stall. After he had doped the milk he went away. When he had gone I slipped away from the cow that was being milked and examined the bottle. I thought—in some curious way—that it would help if I added more medicine from the bottle. Just as I was emptying the remainder of the bottle into the last pail my father returned. He called to me. His voice was angry and threatening. He came striding down the byre. A thick belt used for securing the hind legs of 'kickers' when they were being milked lay in the empty stall.

My father, who was the gentlest of men, lifted the strap. He meant to frighten me. But I did not know this. I cried out. In a flash my mother was between us. She asked my father if he had taken leave of his senses. I suppose he was angry that she should have thought he would have used the strap. He was certainly furious for what I had done. There seemed to be no doubt that had he not seen me adding the medicine and, unsuspecting, had given the calves the milk to drink they would have died.

But for the moment there was menace and danger in the air. Then my father threw down the belt. It was my first glimpse of human passion.

THRESHING

The house was divided into the kitchen, the Room and the Wee Room. The kitchen and room windows looked on to the green and beyond the green the wood—a belt of beeches and elms and an undergrowth of rhododendrons and bourtrees, screening the three houses from the main Alloa-Kincardine-Dunfermline road. The Wee Room window looked into the garden which inclined upwards towards a wall, into which was affixed the high netting of the estate hen-run. A high thorn hedge divided the garden from our neighbours: the Hunters and the Campbells. John Hunter was a factotum of sorts at the Castle: Mrs. Hunter was the hen-wife. Robert Campbell was the estate carter.

As the house was built on a slight slope the back window was little more than a foot from the ground. It was an ordinary two-sash affair with a couple of brass eyes for finger lifts.

It rained a lot at Tulliallan: sometimes for days on end. This is purgatory for a small boy in a small house. But the boredom of those wet hours was solved by threshing. With my sister

Jenny I retired to the Wee Room. We threaded a length of string through one of the brass eyes and began to pull it backwards and forwards vigorously. The sharp edge of the brass chaffed the string and after hours of effort and much string we were rewarded with piles of fluff.

The rain would pour and sluice and batter on the window pane. Outside, a venturesome hen with down-thrust drooping feathers would venture forth and chirawak plaintively in search of corn: or a drookit sparrow would alight heavily on a thorn spray and cock a cheeky eye at us. And the rhone-pipe would gurgle its leit motif in melancholy glee.

FEAR

The spirit of the Sabbath lay like a black pall over the Scottish child of those years. From its deadening effects the adult never wholly escapes. I think I would know the Sabbath even if I woke up, Van-Winkle-like, in the middle of Rannoch Moor.

Sometimes of a summer evening my parents went for a short walk. I recall one such Sabbath evening more vividly than yesterday, though I would barely have reached my fourth birthday. It was then I had my first real taste of the horror of fear.

At a crossing of forest-paths my parents stood talking to one of the gamekeepers. As there was little of the conversation I could understand I had no interest in it and my attention wandered to the world around me. Dusk was gathering. Far away in the depths of the forest the shadows gathered and deepened.

My thoughts of night were associated with going to bed and going to bed with the Lord's Prayer and the idea of God. My idea of God was of another father not unlike my own—the Heavenly Father. But it was also something irrational and dehumanised. God was everything I didn't know and couldn't explain. And of all inexplicable phenomena darkness was perhaps the most profound and, potentially, the most frightening. God was darkness. So I watched God creep from bush to bush, take cover behind the clumps of blaeberries, stoop down into the hollows and advance stealthily behind every tree trunk . . .

My gaze wandered full circle. God was creeping closer and God was darkness. I looked up into my mother's face that was animated in conversation. I could still see her clearly. God was still a far way off. But as I looked around me again, fortified by a long trusting gaze at the all embracing maternal countenance, I could see that God was horribly, frighteningly near—so near indeed that He lurked behind the tree trunks almost on the edge of the path.

My fear must have been communicated to my mother. She told the gamekeeper it was getting dark for the bairn. My father lifted me up and swung me on to his shoulder and we hurried down the forest path. As we came out above the Castle laundry I could see the soft daylight from the open parklands filtering through the thinning trees. I turned my head and looked backward into the forest. The shadows had merged: God filled the forest. I felt the rough shaven cheek of my father and flung my arms tightly round his neck.

This was my first experience of fear, a fear bordering on terror and related to God.

III
SCHOOL DAYS

AUGUST, 1910: READY FOR SCHOOL

KINCARDINE HAD an infant school apart from Tulliallan Parish School. It took the first and second years and was under the charge of Miss Lamb, a rather nebulous and characterless spinster of advanced middle age. My mother was a woman of great beauty, magnificent health and truly extraordinary vitality. Judged by such unfair standards, Miss Lamb probably seemed a much poorer creature than she really was.

The road to school was an interesting one. In front of the main lodge was an open space not unlike a traffic island. It was fed by five roads. The road from Blackhall, the main drive to the Castle, the Kirk Brae, the Manse Brae and a short link-up with the Kilbagie Road, part of the main Alloa road. The Kilbagie road was the main road through Kincardine joining up with the low road through Culross to Dunfermline. The Kirk Brae debouched from the Kilbagie road just before it entered the village and took a left circular loop round the back of the village to join up with the Toll Road, the High Road to Dunfermline.

Opposite the lodge gates was the Auld Kirk manse. The minister was the Reverend John MacLaren, a burly and genial man not concerned to a melancholy extent with the things of the spirit.

The road to school was by way of the Kirk Brae. On the right was the minister's high-walled garden and the minister's Knowe or Glebe, on which Willie Buchanan grazed an odd cow. On the left a strip of wood. Then came some cottages (the remnants of Tulliallan village) mostly occupied by estate workers, and then the farm of Burnside, tenanted by the Allans. Here the road turned sharply right and passed the Sunk Fence Green on the left and the Parish Church on the right: then a street of low red-tiled houses. Near the foot of the street, on the right, stood the Infant School.

THE POLAR BEAR

The minister kept a huge Airedale dog, a magnificent brute that resembled to my childish mind a picture of a polar bear that I had seen in a book. The Polar Bear, which I promptly christened it, used to stand on the dyke and bark and growl in a most ferocious manner. I was not to be reassured that its bark was worse than its bite.

I used to slink round the edge of the Lodge and, if the Polar Bear was on the opposite wall, I would be afraid to move a step. Often, of course, the dog wasn't there and sometimes it gave up barking and went away. But many a morning I would have been late for school had not the postman come to my rescue and led me safely past the danger. Later on I discovered a short cut through the wood behind the Lodge and was thus enabled to cut off the manse corner.

FRIENDSHIP

The first morning at school was something of an ordeal. I was one of those children cursed with shyness: a curse I was to expiate in blood and tears. No doubt the trouble lies in the physiology of the nervous system: but there were many seemingly normal things I could not do. I shrank from crowds: I was anti-gregarious to an almost morbid degree. I preferred to be utterly alone.

My mother was a demon for being in time. My father, she said, was always running at the last minute. If there was a train to catch she would be on the platform at least half an hour before the train was due to arrive: he would be signalling to the engine driver half-a-mile away when the train was due to start.

Not surprising then that I was the first to arrive at school. I took up my stance on the step of the door and waited with a dumb patience. Gradually the children began to gather. Then little groups began to arrive. They were noisy and seemed to know each other well. I knew no one. Gradually they tired of running about and began to crush round the door. I began to tremble and wished I could efface myself completely. Then someone pushed a boy, from behind, right into me. Not knowing what had happened, and thinking a personal attack was being made on me, I struck in terror and hit the boy on the nose, causing it to bleed. At that moment a cry arose: "Here's the teacher; here's the teacher." It rose and swelled in a monotonous rhythm. Then Miss Lamb arrived and I was pointed out as the boy who had bled another's nose. Miss Lamb seemed surprised that I should have done such a thing and reproved me. I was too mortified and ashamed to say anything.

At lunch time I spoke to the boy I had hit. We were of the same size and the biggest boys in the class. He was a shy and sensitive lad and we took to each other immediately, without saying much. Discovering that he came from the Blackhall direction and was too far away to get home for any lunch I invited him to accompany me the length of Blackhall where he could eat his piece while I was having dinner.

So Willie Russell and I set off together for Blackhall and when we got there I advised Willie to sit down at the foot of a large beech tree almost opposite the kitchen window.

I had a plan of campaign but I had said nothing to Willie about it in case it didn't work.

Mother was anxious to know how I had got on. But the most she could get out of me was that I had got on fine. Then I casually remarked that I had brought another boy along with me. Mother wanted to know about him. But all I could say was that his name was Willie Russell and that he came from a place known as the Garlet.

The Garlet, of which I knew nothing, was a tiny group of houses behind the Kilbagie paper works, about a mile and a half along the Alloa road from Blackhall.

I was asked what I meant by leaving the boy at the foot of the tree and was sent out to bring him in. Shy and reluctant, Willie came. Mother welcomed him and sat him down to the table beside me to share in the hot, generous dinner.

PLAIN FARE

There was always plenty of food at Tulliallan. Having the dairy, there were always lashings of milk and cream and butter. Sir James Sievewright and his friends may have gone short of these, but the dairy-maid's family never.

Mother made food part of her religion. She insisted on us eating the maximum of plain wholesome food and had nothing but contempt, in those days, for "they dirt o' cakes and buns." She had a love of words Sir Thomas Urquhart would have delighted in. The delicacies of the confectioners' and bakers' art she described as "turks and pasheries."

She was an excellent baker of scones and baked every day. She excelled in oatcakes, soda scones, treacle scones, sweet scones, potato scones, potato-meal scones and pancakes. When the table was heaped up with these at meal times it literally groaned. I'd give a lot to taste again

those potato scones fried for breakfast. The kind the shops sell taste as if they had been made with floor sweepings: and mostly are.

There was never much butcher meat in the house: that couldn't be afforded. But occasionally there was mince; and herrings new drawn frae the Forth were plentiful in season. And there was always a side of bacon and home-made white puddings.

But what need was there for meat when to half-a-dozen big mealy potatoes could be added a quarter of a pound of good butter—the whole washed down with a half-pint of rich fresh milk? And when the potatoes were preceded by a plateful of thick Scotch broth, pea, lentil or chicken soup and rounded off with a plate of baked rice, swimming in melted golden butter to which a gill of rich skimmed cream was added, it will be understood that butcher meat would have been little short of an impertinence.

Mother elicited the information that Willie's father was a coal miner. Unfortunately no coal miner can afford such a fare of farm and dairy produce—and we were only able to do so by virtue of our position, for officially we were not allowed either cream or unlimited butter and milk—so it goes without saying that Willie enjoyed his dinner.

MAN AND BOY

From that meal a friendship was formed that lasted through all the many vicissitudes of school life—and even for a few years beyond. I was conscious then as I am now that I played Willie many a mean and dirty trick. But through all he remained loyal, devoted, generous and imperturbable. As I knew him he was wholly without malice, hatred, envy or jealousy. I never saw him angry. If he lacked anything, it was a sense of humour.

When I met him as a man many years afterwards he had travelled widely as an expert in electrical engineering and had worked for a time in the U.S.S.R. A miner's son, he had recently been listening to A. J. Cook, then secretary of the Miners' Federation. But though he acknowledged Cook's sincerity, he would have nothing to do with his politics. He was a true-blue Conservative and considered Alloa the finest town on earth. The Baptist religion in which he had been brought up seemed to have fettered rather than liberated much that was fine in his thought and instinct as a boy.

MANNERS MAKETH MAN

The two years at the infant school passed without much incident. I won a first prize for a plasticine bunch of grapes, confounded my teacher by insisting against all her denials that there was a bird that spelled r-o-c (I had been browsing on an illustrated *Sinbad the Sailor* at home); and gave the Reverend John MacLaren a lesson in good manners.

The Reverend John was visiting the infants one day and was asking questions. He asked me one which I did not catch. I rose stiffly and very self-consciously and said: "I beg your pardon, sir."

The Reverend John glared at me.

"What do you say?"

"I beg-your-pardon, sir."

The good man turned to Miss Lamb.

“Confound it! What’s the boy saying?”

“He’s begging your pardon, Mr. MacLaren.”

“Begging my pardon? What on earth for? Oh, I see; I see.”

Having seen, Mr. MacLaren, blushing deeply, made an undignified exit.

Miss Lamb commended me for my excellent manners. I had no idea what the fuss was about.

GETTING AN EARFUL

One of the Blackhall boys had put an air-gun to my left ear and shot a hen’s feather into it.

In my second infant year we had progressed to the point of arithmetical signs. The sign of equality, the teacher informed us, was two short strokes one beneath the other. I saw no harm in adding another for luck. Immediately the boy on my right informed the teacher. She strode up the passage, looked at my jotter and, confirming the information, hit me a resounding skelp on the ear.

By the time I got home it was running freely. Dr. Love was called in. He was an ancient and fragile-looking medico with a neat white beard. He teethered a bit and said that teachers should be put in jail for striking children on the head. Strap them on the bottom or the palms of the hands, yes. But the head——He shook his own sadly.

The ear continued to give trouble off and on for a few years. But beyond administering drops that seemed to effervesce in the ear passage, Dr. Love did nothing and the hearing became very dull.

The offending teacher was a burly thick-set woman in her early forties. For the most part she was a good-natured individual but, like most burly spinsters, a bit of an ill-natured targe when her temper was roused. I imagine she got a certain degree of pleasure from rough-handling offending scholars. But what verbal rough-handling she got from my mother she is certain not to have forgotten this side of the grave.

My mother like most mothers could not tolerate any injustices perpetrated on her children. She would have defended us against famished tigers: and routed them. She had no respect where the defence of her children was concerned with the delicacies of social etiquette.

There was another teacher who had done me some injury or other. My mother had few opportunities for social intercourse—especially with the Kincardine folk. But this particular teacher worshipped in an adjacent pew in the Parish Church. The Sabbath following the alleged outrage on me, mother was descending the stairs behind her. She called to her. But the teacher was too well-bred to acknowledge any such salutation within God’s house. My mother, thinking she was going to escape her, brushed past some intervening worshippers and quickly placed her foot on her skirt as it trailed the steps behind. There was a sudden tearing of cloth and the skirt parted from the waistband with unmaidenly and rather hilarious results. Despite the teacher’s alarm and embarrassment she got a thorough lecture on the behaviour she was to adopt in future towards me, together with a sharp reprimand not to ignore her summons in future. And then, and only then, was the foot released from her skirt and the poor ashamed and distressed creature, all her prim and puking pride shattered, enabled to slink away vainly endeavouring to hide the rip in her black satin dress that revealed the white princess petticoat across her plump buttocks.

STIGMA

Coming from Blackhall I found carried a certain stigma. It was thrown in my teeth quite often and occasioned much distress. It seemed that the Blackhall boys—with what truth I had no certain means of knowing though one of them did have a grave sadistic strain in him—were credited with cutting the throats of young birds, a day or two old, in the nest. Especially the young of thrushes and blackbirds. Later there were adults who assured me they had seen it done.

When any of the Kincardine children wanted to annoy me they would accuse me of participating in this revolting crime, and my horrified denials were mocked at as a sure sign of guilt.

And my denials were horrified. The thought of the young naked birds with their throats cut haunted me. I enquired of my mother if there were any truth in the allegation. She assured me there was and added that she could never understand when she came to Tulliallan first how it was that the thrushes sang so sadly in the mornings and evenings of early spring until the explanation had occurred to her. And maybe the Tulliallan thrushes did sing more sadly than the thrushes of Kirkmaiden or Gala. Afterwards I used to lie abed in the early morning, the grey spring dawn seeping in at the window, and listen to the melancholy pipe of the mavis and picture the mutilated young ones in the nests. Maybe I was over-sentimental like my mother; maybe like her I gave to the heart of the mother-bird the emotions of the human mother. Maybe there is not the slightest scientific basis for believing that a bird can know grief. But there is equally as little scientific basis for believing that it cannot.

But however that may be the stigma haunted me for years (in a vague way it still does); and I have never been able to listen to the mavis’s song without experiencing the emotions of melancholy.

A MATTER OF BUTTONS

About this time also, probably in Miss Lamb’s year, I developed an unholy fear of the police, a fear which has not wholly died in me. Most healthy and normal children have an urge towards incendiarism. Even Bernard Shaw has confessed to childish incendiarism—and it is difficult to think of Shaw ever having had the temerity to say boo to a goose. But whereas Shaw merely set fire to the property of a gentleman with “a strong sense of humour and a kindly nature,” I set fire to a hollow log, the property of Sir James Sievewright.

Indeed it wasn’t properly a fire at all. The hollow of the log was filled with some papers, withered nettles, leaves and the like, and the result was a mountain of smoke and the tiniest mouse of flame.

But there was hell to pay for it and I was severely censured. Doubtless it was only intended that I should be frightened out of my seven senses. Otherwise I might next set fire to something really valuable—possibly the hay shed. But the main thing that stuck in my mind was the threat of the police and what the police did to boys who were guilty of incendiarism.

A few days later I chanced to be in Kincardine on a Saturday morning—probably on some small errand. Howbeit, I came face to face with the village constable almost opposite the police station in the Kilbagie Road.

I emitted a frightened yell and bolted. The constable called after me, but I ran like the wind.

In a sense this constable must have been a much better psychologist than many of his kind. Weighing up the situation correctly, he dashed into the station, emerged with his bicycle and followed me. He overtook me near the top of the Manse Brae.

By this time I was sobbing wildly and nearly frantic. But when I turned round and saw I was being pursued by the bicycle, I nearly collapsed and staggered into the dyke for some protection and support.

The constable flung his bike on the grass verge and approached. His voice was kindly and concerned; but I had no mind to concentrate on his words. Then he opened his pocket and fished out a handful of 'bachelor buttons.' This was indeed a peace offering. I sensed that he was trying to make friends with me. But this seemed all against the laws of constabulary duty. Still sobbing convulsively, I refused them. He pressed them on me. Then he stood back and shook his head sadly. I knew now that he wouldn't follow me, and, strength flowing back into my limbs, I seized the opportunity and bolted. It was easier now since I was almost within sight of home.

He told my mother afterwards that he was very distressed to see me having such a fear of him, adding that it was harmful and entirely unjustified for children to have the bogey of the police held up to them. But for all that she remained faintly sceptical of this worthy constable's notions of his duties. The less truck one had with the police, she felt, the better.

PRELUDE TO ARCHIE MacLELLAN

I was anxious to leave the Infant School and proceed to the senior school at the foot of the Toll Road. I was anxious to make the better acquaintance of a lad who had already become almost legendary in his exploits and who was to become the hero of my Tulliallan days.

This lad, Archibald MacLellan, was a son of the grieve at the home farm of Windyhill, about a mile and a half north-west of Blackhall. Archie was some five years my senior. I had already made his acquaintance under very painful circumstances.

It was just before I had gone to school and I was still wearing the kilt. I met him coming from school on the road to the Castle, just behind the dairy. There were others there but I only remember Archie.

Archie produced a small length of stick and an apple. There was a wasps' nest at the foot of a tree and the small hole in the ground was busy with their traffic. He promised me the apple (temptingly red-cheeked but a crab for all that) if I would stir up the bike with the stick. I was entirely innocent of any danger and promptly offered to do so.

But as soon as I placed the stick in the entrance the wasps were round me in a cloud. I was immediately stung in more places than I could tell.

Howling murder, I ran off home. Luckily, Roderick MacKay, son of the coachman Willie MacKay, and himself one of the stablemen, was grooming a horse at the time in the Blackhall Court. Hearing my cries and knowing them to be genuine, he came running to my assistance. He carried me to their house, promptly extracted the stings with a watch-key and then applied raw whisky.

His promptitude and good sense, if it did not save me from death, certainly saved me from serious illness for I was very badly stung indeed.

SHETLAND PONIES

I was something of a hero to the MacKays at this time. About a week previously, Willie had been leading in his Shetland ponies from one of the Castle parks. Some of the younger ones were rather wild and they had all to be led by halters. Willie enlisted the aid of the available boys to assist him. Willie, a Sutherlandshire Highlander, had no great urge at any time to kill himself with overwork. Being the youngest boy present, he gave me what he thought was the quietest Sheltie. I was very proud of my charge and wound the end of the halter carefully round my hand, determined that mine should not escape.

The cavalcade set off down the Castle road to Blackhall. But at the Gravel Drive, a private walk through the Castle parks, my Sheltie took it into his head to make a bolt for freedom. Not being able to free myself, I was pulled after it. Fortunately the Sheltie kept to the close-cropped grass verge, so that when I was finally pulled off my feet and dragged along, I sustained little injury. Light though I was, I was much too heavy to be dragged indefinitely by the Sheltie.

Willie MacKay came running up, concerned as to whether I had injured myself. Finding I wasn't hurt, he was loud in praise of my bravery in holding on to the halter. Being too dazed to point out that I had been unable to free my hand from the halter, I had perforce to bask in the acclamation, in addition to which I emerged the richer by a threepenny bit.

It was a long while before various depredations enabled me to live down the good opinion of the MacKays.

THE BLACK BEAR

In many ways Archie MacLellan was the hero of Tulliallan School. He was a brilliant scholar, handsome in a strong masculine way, a natural born leader and adventurer. There were few things in which he did not excel.

One morning going to school through Allan's farm at Burnbrae, Archie was attracted by a seagull that tilted and planed around us. He casually picked up a piece of slate, skimmed it through the air and brought the gull down. This was the kind of thing Archie could do with his eyes shut. He knew nothing of physical fear and I doubt if any other form of fear existed for him. That after an adventurous career he should have become a lone trapper in the frozen north of Canada, and finally a prosperous fur trader, seems, looking back, somehow inevitable.

My first real exploit with Archie was while I was still very young—certainly no more than eight years old.

Jock and I had been at Windyhill, and Middlemas the general estate overseer—a fat barrel of a man with a kindly heart—had got us on to cutting thistles along with Archie, who was more than likely being paid for his work.

The field overlooked the North Loch. Probably it had been so called by Sir James Sievewright for the estate people still called it the Pepper Mill Dam. Whether or not there ever was a pepper mill in the district I have never been able to find out.

It was a very beautiful stretch of water in those days. The Tulliallan Forest came right down to the water's edge, apart from the field where we were working. At the corner of the field and the forest stood a wooden boat-shed, much weathered and the worse of wear, but with a peculiar and romantic aspect. Across the loch, which was about a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad, was a stretch of fields, mostly fallow, rising to a proud crest of Tulliallan pines. The

water had been dammed at the Windyhill end and from there ran a lade to the filtering tanks about a mile away.

It was a warm afternoon and after we had cut thistles for some time Archie suggested a row on the loch. The small boat used almost exclusively by the gamekeepers lay beached beside the boat-house.

The idea of a sail on the loch with Archie at the oars was too thrilling to be resisted, so off we went.

In the Eden that was Tulliallan there was more than one serpent: they carried guns and had ugly black dogs at their heels.

The head gamekeeper at this time was known as the Black Bear. He had been promoted on the field, so to speak, and was generally disliked for his boastful, overbearing manner.

Jock and I had good reason to fear him for he hounded us home whenever he saw us. Archie had more reason to fear him. But as I have already said, Archie had no fear in him. The Black Bear had been particularly severe on Archie and indeed he conducted such a vendetta against him that he finally caused the MacLellans to leave Tulliallan. I have myself physical reasons for remembering him without affection. But for him I might have played the pipes superlatively well.

When we were returning to the shore, the Bear, who had been watching us from behind a tree, suddenly made his appearance and shouted to us in his harsh sergeant-major voice.

So great was my terror for him that, without pausing for a moment, I jumped out of the boat. Instinct prompted drowning as the better form of death. Fortunately Archie had brought his thistle-cutter with him and, using it as a boat-hook, managed to fish me out.

We were in about six feet of water at the time and when Archie beached the boat the Bear sprang forward presumably to lay hands on him. But, quick as a flash, Archie raised the thistle-cutter above his head.

“Stand back!” he cried, “or I’ll knock your brains out.”

Distressed and hysterical though I was, I distinctly recall the sound of Archie’s voice and the expression on his face. His tone was ice-cold. And the look in his eyes indicated that he would have thought no more of driving the iron spud of the thistle-cutter through the keeper’s skull than he would have thought of cracking an egg.

The Bear must have seen that look and decided to be discreet. He stepped back. As the tension snapped, Jock and I took to our heels and didn’t stop till we were in sight of home.

I could not go home and say how I had got wet. Not only had I been solemnly warned not to go near any water; but I had also been expressly forbidden to associate with Archie MacLellan. So I invented a plausible tale about slipping into the Minnow Burn. This brought me sympathy and a big mug of cocoa and an early bed-time.

The next morning, however, the Bear appeared at Blackhall, told a tale of how I had been nearly drowned through the folly of Archie MacLellan and advised my mother to protest not only to Archie’s father but to the factor also. But though my mother had no love for Archie, she knew that any complaints made to the factor would react on Archie’s father and probably cost him his job. Besides she had a very great regard for Archie’s father, and sympathised with him in having so ‘wild’ a son. What concerned her most was the fact that I might well have been drowned and that I had told a pack of plausible lies. There was neither sympathy nor a mug of cocoa for me that day.

There was another occasion on which I was grateful for Archie MacLellan's courage and great coolness in the face of danger. Jock and I were accompanying him home to Windyhill one afternoon. We were chatting away as we walked through the White Sink Park where Harry Gray, tenant farmer of Kawkhill, grassed his fat bullocks.

Without any warning there came a sudden and terrifying thunder of hooves behind us. We were being attacked by a mad bullock. Jock and I were petrified. The beast was only a few yards from us and already its great head was lowered for the attack.

Archie had been peeling a thin willow wand as we walked through the park. It was the only weapon we had. He shouted to us to run for the fence which was still a good hundred yards away. We ran.

Archie stood stock-still and awaited the bullock's onslaught. He waited till the lowered head was in striking distance. He slashed it across the eyes with the willow wand that was almost as pliable as a whip lash, and quickly and deftly stepped aside.

He did not run: that way he knew he would be caught. He stood his ground and waited for the next attack. He repeated his tactics for a second and a third time before the crazed animal thundered down the park, smarting with pain and probably blinded.

Even then Archie did not run, though he came towards us with a slightly quicker step than usual. Nor did he once look behind. But a lad like Archie did not need to look behind. He knew he could trust his ears to warn him of any recurrence of the danger.

We praised him with genuine praise and wonder. But he made light of it. Indeed it slowly dawned on us that he did not need to make light of his courage. Archie had never been even for a moment afraid of the bullock: never for a moment had he doubted his ability to handle the situation. But there could be no doubt that he saved our lives.

Archie MacLellan remains the one and only hero, in the full romantic story-book sense, I have ever known. And despite the incident of the wasps' bike, he was chivalrous and kind-hearted.

The last time I saw him was on a winter's afternoon at Kawkhill. He was shooting golden plover in Harry Gray's shore fields. The birds were few and swift of wing. I went across the fields with him. There was only one possible bird and Archie got it. I picked it up, a plump cock: his breast speckled with gold. I handed it to him. He was about to take it when he asked me if I'd ever tasted golden plover. I said I hadn't. He pressed it on me.

There was a distant look in Archie's eyes. The winter dusk had come down suddenly and we leaned on the field gate and talked quietly. I had half-hoped he would teach me the words of one of his rich bawdy songs—for he was a gallant as well as a cavalier. But I soon apprehended his different mood. Here was an Archie I had never known; wistful, dreamy, distant and reminiscent. Did I remember this incident: and that?

But he was recalling them for his own satisfaction. I could sense that he was wearied of Tulliallan that had dealt so unjustly with him and through him with his father. I could sense though vaguely that his eye was reaching out beyond Tulliallan, beyond Scotland, and the waters that beat on her shores; could feel in some dim way in the grey half-light of that winter's afternoon that he was reaching out to the boundaries of the wide world itself.

I am indebted to the editor of the *People's Journal* for permission to reprint the following note about this extraordinary hero of my boyhood.

"Adventurous Trip to Reach Widowed Mother
Scotsman's Dash from Frozen North to Fife"

"From the eternal snow and ice of the Arctic a Kincardine-on-Forth man has arrived at his home to mourn the death of his father after a long and dangerous journey extending over many weeks through ice floes.

"Tall and of athletic build, Mr. Archibald McLellan, the returned emigrant, who is in his early thirties, left Fife some eight years ago, and did not learn of the death of his father until nearly ten months after the funeral.

"Mails, he told me, were as few as settlers on the extreme north of the North-West Frontier territory, where he has been trapping and trading. Due to the difficulties of transport in the frozen North and the long periods trappers are away on their hunting grounds they are often out of touch with civilisation for months on end.

"'As with letters, so with news,' remarked Mr. McLellan. 'We seldom see newspapers, but from time to time hear snatches of ongoings in the outer world either from the outposts of the North-West Mounted Police, who are equipped with radio, or from fellow-trappers.'

"'I have seen the 'People's Journal' away up on the Arctic circle, where there are fully a dozen Aberdonians working with the Hudson Bay Company at present, and when I meet them I get a share of their home papers.'

"When he received his only letter last year in September from his mother away up in the frozen wilderness in the extreme North-West of Canada Mr. McLellan learned with pained surprise that his father had died the previous December.

"To get home was the uppermost thought in his mind, but as the letter arrived after the last steamer had left Coronation Gulf, and the handful of trappers and traders resigned themselves to some nine months' imprisonment in the ice, Mr. McLellan reluctantly had to abandon at that time any prospects of seeing Scotland.

"Eagerly he and a sole companion, a Norwegian, looked forward to the breaking up of the icefields. When midsummer came the ice was still holding.

"By early July prospects had improved slightly, but only for a short spell. To his dismay, when Mr. McLellan got any reliable information about conditions along the north-west coastline he learned that the only boat had left the mouth of the Mackenzie River, several hundred miles from where he was located.

"He decided to make a do-or-die effort to reach the outer world. The most direct route to the Atlantic was through the scores of straits north of the Hudson Gulf, but Mr. McLellan also knew that vessels were occasionally ice-bound for years in this area.

"But the homing instinct was strong, and, though it involved a voyage along the unknown north-west coast into the Pacific Ocean, Mr. McLellan and his companion moved off on their perilous journey of some 4500 miles to Vancouver in mid-July. When he reached Kincardine he estimated that he had done some 11,000 miles.

"The first 3000 miles were known to be fraught with grave danger. Even at the best the thousands of miles of ice on breaking drifts from the coastline just sufficiently far to allow a small vessel to pass along before it closes in again for another winter.

“Mr. McLellan’s craft was a two-masted schooner, and, loaded with the winter’s catch, he and his companion hugged the coast, past towering icebergs for some 1500 miles, until they reached Point Barrow, the most north-west corner of Alaska.

“So far they had encountered remarkably good luck, but the negotiation of Point Barrow leading into the Behring Strait required the most careful navigation, for if caught in what is known among mariners as the ‘nor’-west drift’ and carried towards Wrangel Island and Siberia and the haunts of the polar bear and wolves the prospects were forbidding.

“‘Only Amundsen and his “Maud” have emerged from the nor’-west drift,’ Mr. McLellan told me, ‘after being marooned for a year. However, we managed to get safely into the Behring Strait.

“‘Our luck was holding, and sneaking down between the icebergs and the coast into the Behring Sea, with an ill-fated steamer high and dry on the ice an unwelcome reminder, our trusty ship eventually reached the Aleutian Islands, in the Pacific, when it was a case of plain sailing for Vancouver.

“‘There we unloaded our skins, and had a three weeks’ rest before I set out on the second stage of my long trip across Canada to the old home town in Fife.’

“Mr. McLellan told me that as far as he knew his schooner was the first that had made the entire journey from Coronation Gulf round Point Barrow.

“When I found him in his native Forthside town this returned emigrant, who has been living among snow and ice for the past eight years, was actually feeling more keenly our first taste of winter than the intense cold of the Arctic. Our raw frosty pall was far more disagreeable than the 40-below-zero temperature of Polar bear lands.

“‘I have been trying very hard,’ he assured me, shrugging his shoulders, ‘to get warm since I got back home. You’d think I had come from the Equator rather than from the Arctic regions. I suppose it is really because I am missing my furs. I cannot get the ankles properly protected at all. Mufflers, gloves and a heavy coat don’t seem to be sufficient so far.’

“Into his 33 years Mr. McLellan has crammed a wonderful variety of experiences. One of a family of several sons, he got the finishing touches to his education at Dunfermline High School when the Great War was in progress.

“With the wanderlust tingling in his veins he ‘joined up’ though under age. This but stirred the desire for further explorations, and after serving his ‘time’ as a ship’s carpenter in Jeffrey’s yards in Alloa, he set off across the Atlantic.

“With one of the Hudson Bay Company he obtained his first thirst for the trapping game, and subsequently started there on his own.

“In the isolated wastes round Coronation Gulf, which is the most northern limit the white man is allowed to hunt, Mr. McLellan and his Norwegian mate have led a simple, lonely life.

“White foxes, which are about the size of a tomcat, lemmings, which are the Arctic rodent, seals and bears are the principal trophies bagged in the course of a winter’s trail.

“Mr. McLellan explained, however, that the country was being overrun by wolves, which are coming down from the Eskimo lands farther north, and causing ravages among their useful dog teams.

"'To one who likes,' laughed Mr. McLellan, 'the simple life of the Arctic must have a strong appeal. You are your own boss, go out and in when you like, and, with gun or line, need never lack something for the pot. Added to that there is the spice of adventure and thrills of the hunt. As soon as it is possible I shall be back there again.'"

CARRYING MILK

In addition to the Castle milk which my father delivered himself, milk had also to be delivered to the factor's house at Burnbrae (by way of the Kirk Brae, the Sunk Fence and a field path) and to John Menzies, the forester, at the Keir.

The Keir was a desolate place, set in a few acres of fallow clearing in the forest. Nelly Buchanan, whose father had a small croft at the entrance to the village opposite the Manse Brae, carried the milk to the Keir. Mother often wondered how she did it on a dark winter's morning. When I had to walk to the Keir between five and six in the mornings a few years later, I thought it eerie myself. However, Nelly refused to carry the milk any longer and gave notice to the factor.

At this time I was carrying milk to his house at Burnbrae, to save my father. The factor thought I was the one to carry the milk to the Keir. He approached my father who, however, did not make any decision without my mother knowing about it.

So the factor came to my mother. He knew he would have to approach the subject delicately.

"The boy . . . he's getting on now?"

The factor, a tall thin cadaverous man, 'guldered' as my mother described his guttural hesitating mumbling staccato manner of talking.

"He'll—ahem—be needing boots—I mean——"

"Just out wi' it."

"Well——What about the boy taking the milk to the Keir—it would always—help to buy boots for him."

"I think I've always managed to get what boots did him."

"Yes, of course. Certainly. But the extra money——"

"I wouldn't carry milk to the Keir, if your head was like a daisy—and what I wouldn't do myself I wouldn't ask any other body to do. So the boy's no' carrying the milk, and that's that."

There weren't many people the factor feared: his powers were dictatorial and almost unlimited, and he exercised them without any very fine discretion. But he certainly feared and respected my mother. She was of an uncompromising and downright character at any time, but, where the interests of her family were concerned, she was adamant.

MITTENS

In those days it was thought that it would mitigate against the effects of winter frosts to wear mittens when carrying milk. The mittens probably kept the backs of the hands warm and prevented them from chapping; and they certainly allowed the fingers free movement—presumably for delicate or intricate work. But as it was always the tips of my fingers that suffered most from the frost and cold, I considered them a waste of good wool. They were very

common before the War. Elderly women, or those suffering from indifferent circulation, used to knit with them. They seem to have vanished from the rural districts.

JACK FROST

As boys we suffered great agony from frost. The feet, the hands and the tips of the ears suffered most. We used to kick our numb frozen feet against a wall in an endeavour to bring back the circulation—much to the detriment of our footwear. Gloves or mittens provided little protection and we had little patience for them.

Chilblains usually came with the winter frosts. If this painful complaint is the result of poor circulation, mine must have been beggarly. When painted with iodine—Dr. Love's remedy—they looked fearsome.

My father suggested a seemingly more radical cure—that of running through the snow with the feet bare. The idea appealed to me. So one winter's night when the snow was soft and thick and new fallen I took off my boots and stockings on the hearth-rug and ventured forth. I was to take a run the length of the Square and come straight back.

But the effect of running in the soft snow was so delightful and sensuous that I ran half-way to the Castle and would have run farther had my lungs not protested. When I got back and rubbed my feet with a towel, they glowed and throbbed with the stimulation. The chilblains did not completely disappear, but they became bearable—and indeed for a time were almost unnoticeable.

If the frosts were severe and held long enough the lochs froze. When this happened a holiday was declared. Skates were looked out and the trek from Kincardine to the Moor Loch began.

There were many happy hours spent on the ice. It wasn't necessary to be able to skate to enjoy the fun. As boys we usually concentrated on one slide running from a conveniently level stretch. No one was considered expert until they could finish the slide on their 'hunkers'; that is, in a squatting position, arms clasping knees.

But occasionally there were some nasty spills. I remember Willie Russell falling backwards off his feet and striking the ice with such force with the back of his head that the ice, which was almost three inches thick, was cracked right through.

The main reason for the skating holidays was due to the fact that Mr. Weir, the schoolmaster, was a keen curler, and there were many enthusiasts of the roaring game in and around Tulliallan.

There was a small curling pond adjacent to the Moor Loch, complete with a curling house, and here the petty burghal, trading and professional elements sported themselves till the early darkness put an end to their fun. No working men were allowed to play; I don't suppose they lost much by this—except, perhaps, the drams.

As boys we found the game rather dull to watch—though the occasional antics of some rheumatic worthy, hirpling around with the brush 'sooping her up' would provide mild entertainment. Our hopes that one or other of them might fall and break a leg were never realised.

But if the curlers had to cease with the fading light the general merriment on the Loch continued—especially if there were a moon. The courting couples, temporary or permanent, especially enjoyed themselves. They would be slipping and falling and the resulting display of

female ankle and lace petticoats would occasion much hysterical and sex-heightened laughter. Standing back in the silence of the forest, it sounded strangely alien and slightly mad.

I have a fleeting memory of my eldest sister, Barbara, coming on to the ice just as dusk was falling. She had my mother's beauty—if possible, more delicately; and with her long fur-trimmed coat and muff she looked more graceful and beautiful than I had ever seen her: she remains a dim but somehow perfect memory of Edwardian womanhood. But then there was always something strange and wonderful about Barbara in those days. Her London clothes of the best middle-class taste, her refined diction and middle-class manners not only set her apart from the rest of us: they were alien to the Tulliallan scene. That picture on the ice is the last memory of her I have been able to retain.

SNOW

Snow was always a delight. Apart from snowball fights and the making of snowmen, there was the eager hope that it would last long enough to enable us to indulge in sledging. There was a grassy brae in the Cuddy Park which was excellent for sledging—at least when we were very young. Then one year, at school, the snow-balling lost its innocence. Someone started putting stones in the snowballs. The fashion soon spread and there were many minor casualties. I got a nasty one above the right eye myself.

When it got to his ears, Johnny Weir was indignant and read us a stiff lecture. The careless rapture of snow-balling was never recaptured.

But apart from sport, about which I was never wildly enthusiastic, the attraction of snow lay in its magic. I used to stand at the door and look up at the grey-black swirling flakes till I felt I was floating up through the air.

The beauty of the fallen snow, its transfiguration of the landscape, the weird contours it gave to the trees and the hedges never failed to hold me in mouth-gaping wonder. The spruce and the yew trees always emerged in unique splendour from a fall of snow.

I was thought a bit queer for wandering off into the woods by myself; but never more so than after a fall of snow. I could have wandered through the woods and across the parks all day and remained unconscious of the pangs of hunger. I suppose that in so far as this was so, I was abnormal. Natural beauty and 'communing with nature' affected me very deeply—and this from my youngest days. It was late in my teens before I was able to break the hold natural beauty had on me. To such a ridiculous extent did this feeling or apprehension consume me that I could—and often did—weep for the beauty of a solitary tree.

Beauty is truth, said Keats. But what is truth or untruth remains unanswered. Apart from the magic and mystery of words it would be equally relevant to say that beauty is a terminological inexactitude. A sense of horror and shame, of joy and exultation we can understand. Not so easily the sense of, the feeling for, objective beauty. Why should one tree appeal to a child more than another? Manifestly the reason is physiological. There are 'waves' of 'form' as well as waves of light. And if colours are the result of variations in the light wave vibrations, the difference between objective beauty and objective ugliness must lie in the variations of the vibrations of form waves: the former combinations producing a harmony to our sense perceptions, the latter a discord. And, of course, all this adds up to what knowledge and tradition describes as spiritual value—and Keats's truth resolves itself to a matter of harmony.

This beauty-sense was at this time spontaneous, primitive and uncultured. It was much later when the poets, the musicians and the artists began to exercise a conscious influence in the formation and development of æsthetic standards and values.

TREES

Trees remained for me, in the world of nature, my greatest love. A landscape without trees is like a woman without breasts. Mountains can have a grandeur and enchantment such as trees can never have; a river can be noble and sweep with an unsurpassed majesty to the sea; a vacant wine-red moor can challenge the dome of heaven—but the tree remains to enrich and adorn. It is the living tree that comes between man and the rock of the world.

There were many splendid trees on Tulliallan. I loved the various small woods for themselves and later I came to love the forest as a world in itself—a world in which I was a privileged and intimate acquaintance; a cathedral of sylvi-culture in which I was a devout and solitary worshipper. But the trees in the parks and fields, the trees in the hedgerows, and the byeways, I came to love for themselves alone.

Even now, across the years, I can name them and place them as accurately as I can name the books of the Bible, as accurately as my father at the end of seventy years could place and name the fields in his native parish of Kirkcolm in the Rhinns of Galloway.

I do not remember how I came by the names of the common trees or when I could not name them and differentiate between them. Of course there were foreign trees and rare shrubs whose names I never knew. But oak, elm, lime, birch, beech, hawthorn, cherry, fir, larch, spruce, alder, yew, plane, horse chestnut, Spanish chestnut and walnut I could identify at a distance—I could identify a bare twig or a piece of bark; and a leaf was as a printed label.

Trees were not merely regarded as landscape decorations—nor as scenic *objets d'art*. A personal relationship was established. It became natural during a walk through a park to pay each tree the compliment of a personal visit. The relationship was sometimes more intimate. There were branches on which you could swing with safety: there were spreading oaks in which it was possible to efface yourself or enjoy the exploration of its trunk and massive limbs for hours; there were spruce trees where you could shelter in complete dryness in the heaviest rainstorms; there were trees whose height and position provided an opportunity for surveying a district and for seeing without being seen; there were beech trees that had to be respected because their first twenty feet of smooth polished trunk defied you to keep your distance; there were trees in which certain birds always nested; there were trees that provided a cool and generous shade from the heat of the noon-day sun; there were trees that offered shelter from the surly blasts of winter. There were trees that had to be courted before they would yield their secrets; there were trees as open and friendly as an inn door. But there was never an unfriendly tree—unless you would include the monkey puzzle, which I never did.

BIRDS

But my love of trees was no more intense than my love of birds and though the passion of egg collecting took hold of me at a very early age I always tried to avoid taking more than one egg from a nest. Once or twice temptation did overcome me—once in the case of a spotted fly-

catcher and again in the case of a little grebe.

A boy makes the best ornithologist. It may be admirable for an adult to lie in a bog (with a bunch of rotting weeds on his head) for hours on end to study the bittern—but I doubt if it is a job for a grown man.

But a boy is nearer the ground than an adult, he can climb branches that would snap under a man's weight. He can explore bushes, wade burns and examine low banks without any back-breaking stooping. And the boy—if he is that kind of boy—has more patience than the man. He may hope to track down a kingfisher when he is wading in the burn; but if he doesn't it's a glorious enough adventure to be wading.

No matter how common a bird was I never passed by a nest. And in the course of years, handling thousands of blackbirds' and thrushes' eggs, it was possible to note wide variations of colouring. The blackbird provided colourful contrasts: the eggs varying from pale green lightly mottled with grey to an electric blue heavily blotched with cinnamon and rust red.

The greatest variation occurred in the egg of the house sparrow or, as we named it, the 'speug.' We handled—and destroyed—thousands of these every year. Once I found the ornithological equivalent to the elixir of life or perpetual motion—the square egg. It was a speug's, and though it wasn't square in the sense of having right-angled corners, its sides were parallel. Perhaps it might be better described as a perfect cylinder with closed ends. I broke it in the blowing and was nearly mad with rage and grief because I knew no one would believe me without the evidence: and no one did.

We were taught at school to destroy the eggs of sparrows and starlings: they were supposed to be a pest, a menace and a plague to gardeners and farmers. This has since been exposed as nonsense, for like the rooks and the lapwings they are good friends of the husbandman, destroying more grubs and insects than consuming valuable produce.

But we believed what we were told at school and, in Tulliallan, Jock and I took it as a duty to destroy all their eggs. And certainly the sparrows I saw about Tulliallan seemed to spend the livelong day stealing corn from the hens. Moreover, despite our most thorough and persistent harrying raids, the clouds of speugs never seemed to grow less.

At first we tore down the nest—but they were rebuilt in the self-same spot within the week. And so, to save ourselves a climb merely to find the inside lining of feathers not yet completed, we merely took the eggs. We made a weekly tour of the nests and collected the eggs and in this way many a hen speug would lay close on a hundred eggs in the season and never have the pleasure of hatching one.

We had no compunction about this: rather did we congratulate ourselves. We destroyed sparrows and starlings as we destroyed rats: as a duty.

THE PROFESSOR

At first my knowledge of birds, their eggs and nests, was purely local and traditional. And then Professor Alexander Craig Christie became a friend of the family. What the Professor's subject was I don't know and my parents didn't pay much attention to merits or honours of scholasticism except in a very general way.

The Professor was an old man when I knew him first—seventy at least. He had retired many years and came to end his days in the village together with his brother William, who was an analytical chemist and an expert in photography. The Professor had a long white beard and he

always wore a deer-stalker's cap with skip back and front and ear flaps that tied with tape on the crown. He was a botanical expert, a natural historian of distinction, an antiquarian, a patriot, a rigid Victorian moralist, and one of the most upright and kind-hearted men that ever lived. What his background had been it was difficult to say, but there was some talk of his having been at college with King Edward the Seventh.

He had a great regard for my mother. He saw in her the embodiment of the virtues of the Scots peasant; and he revelled in her wit and unfailing good humour. She was far and away the finest story-teller I have ever met—and the Scottish peasantry abound in great story-tellers. Every scene and character in her stories came vividly alive from the first sentence. Her selection of significant detail was masterly to the point of genius and the salt of her humour eludes reproduction, for her intonation, her expression, her gestures were inextricably interwoven in her art. Even at the gate of her grave, when the mischances of the world and the misfortunes of life had scored the anvil of her soul and had all but battered her beneath the sod, she held me spellbound and enthralled—with laughter on our lips and tears in our eyes.

The Professor and his brother spent some of the happiest hours of their lives at our table and round our hearth-rug. Craig, my mother called him: his brother, who was much younger, Mr. William. Sometimes the Professor, after a supper of hot buttered toast, steamed cod and white sauce—and was there ever such a sauce!—would draw in his chair to the roaring fire, stretch out his legs, thrust his hands deep in his trouser pockets and entertain us, in a surprisingly lusty baritone, with a selection of student songs or sea chanties. Thus did I make my first acquaintance with *Shenandoah*, *What Shall we Do with the Drunken Sailor? Riding down from Bangor*, and *Polly-wolly Doodle all the Day*.

When Baden Powell formed the Boy Scout movement, the Professor immediately formed a troop in the village and equipped them out of his slender resources. But his philanthropic and patriotic notions were not encouraged in the district—and a lot of people who should have known better did not hesitate to say he was mad. A hooligan element in the troop thought the idea a splendid joke: they brought it into disrepute and all but wrecked it.

The Professor, as scout master, managed the length of a church parade. The boys were lined up outside the church much to the secret amusement of one section of the congregation and to the disgust and horror of the other, who thought it an outrage to worship God in a khaki shirt and coloured neckerchief.

It was true the Professor was unbendingly obstinate when he thought he was in the right; and he had a scathing contempt for the local big-wigs and the petty village nabbery. The boys had brought their poles: the minister and the elders said they couldn't desecrate the House of God with them. The Professor was adamant. The poles were part of the uniform: either the scouts took their poles inside or were dismissed. The minister and the elders seizing on the suggestion, flatly refused to consider the suggestion any further. And so the scouts were dismissed after the Reverend John MacLaren had got a reprimanding lecture, delivered with a nobility of asperity and dignity, on his duty to his God, his King and his Country.

Because he had wished as a young man to become a soldier, the Professor always slept on a camp chair. He died in his chair on the eve of the War. His brother took a picture of him a few hours after death. I have a copy which bears the simple inscription: "Asleep."

In death as in life it was a noble face, with greatness in its lines and moulding. And his life work—a work of selfless devotion—of notes, specimens and photographs, died with him. And so a great but obscure scholar slept away unhonoured and unsung: and perhaps the only woman who shed a tear for him was a Scots peasant woman. But there can be no doubt that he

sleeps peacefully.

FIRST BOOKS

It was the Professor who gave me my first books on ornithology: *British Birds' Eggs and Nests*, Popularly described by Rev. J. C. Atkinson, author of *Walks and Talks*, *Play Hours and Half Holidays*, *Sketches in Natural History*, and *The Child and the Birds' Nests*. These I read and re-read with avidity. I studied the egg plates so carefully that there wasn't an egg of a British bird I couldn't have identified at sight.

The Reverend Mr. Atkinson gave me endless hours of pleasure and instruction and no doubt encouraged a native tendency to moralizing. The following extracts give a fair idea of the Reverend gentleman's style and convey something of the texture of his thought.

> "And I am equally sure that a little measure of observation and thought will be enough to show the young inquirer not only that the Great Maker of Birds and Giver of their instincts and understandings and capacities has not left some of His creatures imperfect in some of their qualifications and endowments, but that the very contrasts and unlikenesses which first set him on questioning at all, all teach one great lesson and illustrate one great truth,—namely this, 'O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.'"

Again:

> "A few words on another subject. The author has been gravely taken to task by some of his conscientious friends, for delineating in one or two of his former books the pleasures and excitements of egg-hunting, or the satisfaction of trying to form a methodical collection. He has been more than once asked—Do you really mean to encourage boys in robbing birds' nests? Can you defend such a practice from the charge of cruelty?
>
> "If I thought there was any real or necessary connection between a love of egg-hunting—yes, and egg-collecting, too,—and cruelty, I would not say another word for it or about it. But I am sure that the real lover of birds and their nests and eggs is not the boy who is chargeable with those torn and ruined nests—'destroyed' as they may well be styled—which grieve one as he walks along the lanes and hedge sides. If the nest is taken, or rudely and roughly handled, or the eggs all plundered, there is cruelty: for in the one case the poor parent-birds are warned by their instinct, if not their intelligence, to forsake their treasured charge; in the other, they suffer from pitiless robbery of what they most love. But if the parent bird be not rudely and repeatedly driven from her nest,—if the nest be not pulled out of shape, or the containing bushes or environing shelter be not wilfully or carelessly disturbed—if two or three eggs are still left for her to incubate, there is, so far as human observation can reach, no pain, or concern, or uneasiness, to the little owners from the abstraction of one egg or more, and, therefore, of course, no cruelty in the abstraction. The legitimate pursuit of sport in the stubbles and turnip fields, or on the open moor, does not differ more widely from the cruel proceedings of the cold-blooded, hard-hearted slaughterer of his dozens of Rock-birds (many of which are

always left to die lingeringly and miserably), than the object or manner of action of the true lover of birds and their ways and nests and eggs, from the ruthless destruction of every nest and its contents which may happen to be met with by some young loutish country savage."

And finally:

"Again, another answer to the question just noticed is, Eggs were made so beautiful, and so various in their beauty, to gratify and gladden man's eye. I don't dispute the fact that the beautiful shape and the beautiful tints, and the beautiful markings do gratify and gladden the human eye and human heart too. I know they do, and in thousands of cases, and with a great, pure pleasure. But that is a very different thing from saying that God made them so for no other reason, or even for that purpose as a principal reason. How many thousands of eggs, for ten that are seen by man, escape all human notice whatever! How many millions upon millions in the old-world times before there were men to see them, must have had their fair colours, and delicate symmetry, and harmonious intermingling of hues, for no purpose whatever according to this view! No, no. Nature should not be read so. God made the Beasts of the Field, and the Birds of the Air, and the Fishes of the Sea, and the Insects, and the Shells, and the Trees, and Herbs, and Flowers, all, as a rule, wonderfully, gloriously, harmoniously beautiful, because He is a God of order, and beauty, and harmony; because it would have been inconsistent with His own Being, with the necessary purposes of such a Being, with the declared objects of such a Being in Creation, not to have made all 'very good'; and the same reason which accounts for the beauty of the myriad flowers 'born to blush unseen,' for that of the innumerable shells and insects of past days and the present day, for that of the glorious birds of Tropic lands, is all that we want in the way of explanation of the symmetry and beauty of the Bird's Egg—God made it as well as all other things 'very good.'"

But if Mr. Atkinson was wildly romantic and quaintly religious, the writer of *The Child and the Birds' Nests* (based on J. A. Henderson's *Nests and Eggs*) was coldly scientific and provided the perfect antidote and developed my passion for the scientific as opposed to the romantic method of thinking. The opening paragraphs will illustrate the difference:

"It is probable that many hundreds of years ago all birds' eggs were white.

"Very slowly, through long stretches of time, they have been modified to suit their different conditions, until now they show a large variety of colouring. And we may take it, too, that when birds first began to be, there was none of the dainty nest-building with which we are now so familiar."

So much for the scientific attitude.

By the time I had left Tulliallan I had a collection of well over a hundred different specimens (together with many interesting variants), the rarest of which was possibly that of the Little Grebe (or the Spotted Fly Catcher) and the most prized that of the Curlew—for I had more trouble finding a curlew's nest than that of any other bird though the curlew nested in fair numbers on Tulliallan.

MR. WILLIAM

Apart from books, much of my natural history was taught me by the Professor's brother. He was a thin sparse man who must have been approaching sixty. I accompanied Mr. William on nearly all his Tulliallan rambles, during which we photographed many nests and wild flowers—indeed any natural object of rare beauty or significance.

He was extraordinarily kind to me and though I worshipped him, I'm afraid he was either too blind to see it or else I had an uncanny knack of dissembling my emotions.

I remember our last ramble vividly. As we were turning to go home I was about to leap across a burn when he checked me. The burn was too broad: I might fall in. I knew I could jump the burn; and just as he turned his back I jumped and landed clear on the opposite bank. I turned with a shy smile expecting to be congratulated. But my smile quickly faded: his face showed unmistakable anger and I had never seen anger on that face before. Very coldly, very sharply, he said:

"You disobeyed my orders, young man—for the second time to-day."

I was unconscious of having done so. Even now I do not consider I had committed any grave crime.

We walked some three miles through the forest in silence. I made one or two tentative attempts at conversation but he did not reply. We were nearing home and I was distressed at the change that had come over him. Just before the Castle laundry, where beeches grew, I knew there would be some of his favourite edible yellow fungi. Without saying a word I nipped behind a rhododendron, gathered a handful of the fungus and nipped back on to the road almost at his side. I held them out—as a peace offering. At any other time he would have been delighted. But he shook his head decidedly and thrust out his lean jaw. I felt very distressed and humiliated. I asked him, timidly, did he not want them?

"You will apologise to me, young man, before I ever speak to you again. Your conduct to-day has been positively disgraceful. But, if you care to *apologise* . . ."

The cross of shyness was never more difficult to bear. I blushed scarlet: and blushed the more burningly for the act of blushing.

I should have said I didn't know what the word apologise meant: for I didn't.

But I couldn't open my mouth. I crumpled the yellow fungus through my fingers. *What did 'apologise' mean?* Did it mean I was to *do* something or *say* something?

While I was conducting this tortured debate in my mind we came to the road-end. As was our invariable custom he came in for tea at my invitation.

"You're coming in for your tea, Mr. William?"

"Thank you: not to-night."

He strode on. I stood irresolute for a moment uncomprehending—almost unbelieving. Then I walked slowly up the path to the house.

A day or two later I saw him coming up the road. I always ran to meet him. And always he stopped, held out his stick and as I came up gave me a gentle prod in the stomach and made a sound with his tongue to indicate that the bayonet had gone home.

As soon as I saw him I began to run—involuntarily. But half-way towards him I saw that he didn't stop and I faltered, remembering our last meeting. He walked on past me as if I didn't exist.

He was a fine naturalist and a great photographer. The debt I owe him is incalculable.

THE LAST OF THE DOMINIES

The schoolmaster at Tulliallan School was Mr. John Weir, M.A. He was every inch the schoolmaster. But he was rather more than that. I like to think of him as one of the last of the Scottish dominies. He was a character. A well set-up man with broad straight shoulders and a masterful stride, he was physically commanding and dominating. He was also one of the most dominating men in the village and a leading figure in most of its social and religious life.

He had an enormous zest for life and possessed the most mordant wit of any man I have ever known. As scholars we had a holy dread of him, for he could rule with a fierce unsparing rod and he did not suffer fools or louts gladly. But all of us, whether we came under the lash of his tongue or his tawse, had an abiding respect for him. I cannot recall anyone who bore him a grudge, beyond the moment, or who spoke ill of him either in the playground or out of school hours. No schoolmaster could ask for a greater testimony.

A newspaper note on his retirement from Tulliallan School is interesting:

"Retiral of Tulliallan Headmaster
Mr. John Weir's Notable Career
A Lover of Music

"Kincardine is about to lose one of its most prominent citizens through the retiral at the end of this month of Mr. John Weir, the popular headmaster of Tulliallan School. During the long period of thirty-five years Mr. Weir has not only ruled over the scholastic affairs of the seaport town, but he has all along taken such a prominent part in what activities it could boast of, that his going will create a blank which will be difficult to fill. In music, sport and the Church he has been persona grata. In fact, in all that pertained to the well-being of the place he has proved himself a valued citizen, unwearied in his devotion to duty (as the success of the school indicates), enthusiastic in all that he set his heart and mind on, and untiring in his energy for the betterment of the social life of the place. That his presence in the town and his work in connection with its institutions will be missed is to put it very mildly indeed.

"Mr. Weir came to Kincardine from an assistantship in Glasgow High School in March, 1897, in succession to Mr. James Barr, M.A. The old School Board of five members was then in existence, the only surviving member of that Board being the Rev. John McLaren, recently retired.

"A great lover of music and always interested in school singing, Mr. Weir has all along loved the beauty of children's voices when properly used, and tried to foster a love for good music among his scholars. In the early years of this century Tulliallan School choirs performed simplified versions of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*, and choirs from the School competed for several years at Fife Musical Festival.

His interest in church matters is reflected in the fact that from 1914 to this year he has been Session Clerk of Tulliallan Church and a member of the Church choir for many years.

"In Masonic circles he also played a part and in 1903 was elected R.W.M. of Lodge St. John, Tulliallan, holding the office for four years.

"In the domain of sport golf claimed him as a devotee and his active interest in the game led to his being appointed Secretary of Tulliallan Golf Club, the duties of which

office he performed with much acceptance for some considerable time.

"His musical proclivities led him to take more than an ordinary interest in Scottish country dancing, and for four years he conducted a class in Kincardine, the members of which gave very much appreciated public displays frequently. As recently as this year's Fife Musical Festival two teams of eight each were entered, these being the only competing teams that contained equal numbers of male and female performers.

"Mr. Weir's wide knowledge of music and musical productions enabled him to adopt the rôle of critic occasionally, and in this connection his critiques of the Alloa Operatic Society's and the Alloa Musical Association's annual performances, published in the *Journal*, were always looked forward to and invariably appreciated for their fresh and discerning treatment.

"We understand that Mr. Weir is to spend his retirement in Auchterarder."

One great advantage the country schoolmaster has over his city or urban compatriot lies in the fact that he not only knows his scholar but his parents and his background as well—often he knows more of this and its real significance than the scholar.

Johnny Weir knew all about us. He was able to assess our characters and make allowances for our weaknesses that he would not otherwise have been able to do.

There was nothing soft or sentimental about him: quite frequently he could be really bad tempered. When in a rage he was not inclined to bother about such trifles as justice and he could lay out right and left with his tawse in no uncertain fashion. A scholar who had the temerity to take advantage of him once never had the courage to do so again.

His grand passion, I believe, was for singing. He was a remarkably good singer himself and a fine teacher. His voice in speech was clear and resonant: his diction was rich and pure. His readings in dialect—from the Waverley Novels—especially Cuddie Headrigg in *Old Mortality*, was such that those who heard him with anything of understanding are never likely to forget. The fine voice, and the evident sincerity of it, made memorable most of his religious instruction. Such maxims as "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" are burned in my mind when the religious instruction of other teachers is forgotten.

But it was to the singing lessons he brought his greatest verve and flair. He must have revelled in them even though we broke his heart.

He vacillated between Gilbert and Sullivan and the Auld Scots Sangs—especially the songs of Burns. His favourite—if he had a favourite—was *Wilt thou be my dearie?*: for we got that beautiful melody more than any other. His staff were probably rather tired of it. I remember distinctly one morning returning from the music lesson, which was always taken in his own classroom, to hear our own teacher saying to Jenny Fotheringham, the accompanist:

"Well: what's wrong with his Dearie this morning?"

"*Mary Morrison* came close as second favourite. Then *Robin Tamson's Smiddy*, *Last May a Braw Wooer* and *The Laird o'Cockpen*."

Looking back, I think his music lessons were the most valuable part of my formal education. The love of melody, born in the home, was strengthened and clarified through his teaching, so that a few years later I was able to absorb the great masters—especially Beethoven—without difficulty. The teaching of spelling, arithmetic, history or geography is no great task for any normal and adequately trained adult. But to inculcate a love for music in children in limited time and under indifferent conditions, requires unusual ability, unbelievable patience and a touch of genius.

When we were not struggling with the Auld Scots Sangs we were toiling with Gilbert and Sullivan. The favourites, as I remember them and in approximate order, were: *A Policeman's Lot is not a happy one*: *For I am a Pirate King*: *They Stole the Prince and brought him here*: *There lived a King so I've been told*: *Here's a first-rate opportunity to be Married with Impunity* and *He shivered and Shook as I gave the Sign for the Stroke he didn't deserve*.

We must have looked as bonnie a collection of raw and glaikit gommerils as ever stood up for a music lesson. And our vocal efforts must have been a sore trial. He would coax and cajole, bully and explain. And, no doubt when his patience had ran its limit, he would mock. And then he roasted us. When sarcastic he invariably lapsed into the Doric—otherwise he might have lost control of himself; the one unpardonable offence in a teacher of children.

He would fling down his baton and shake his head in sorrow and a forgiving fullness of knowledge.

"You're a bonnie lot! You would vex the archangel Gabriel. Here's Davie: his mooth gan this wey when it should be gan that wey."

He would demonstrate with his hands—and we didn't feel like laughing.

One morning we were attempting a Scots love song. Maybe we were feeling a bit self-conscious—many of us taking the first fearsome steps beyond puberty. He stopped and looked at us quizzically.

"I'd like fine to see you! It would be a bonnie sicht to see you courtin' a lassie."

If ever a man should have been compelled, on the pain of death, to write his memoirs, that man was John Weir. He saw children grow up and marry and have children, and their children grow up, too. He knew their fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers. He knew the village life intimately. He saw it slumber and doze in the lethargic autumn of the Victorian era; watched it mellow almost to ripe rottenness in the brief Indian Summer of Edwardianism; experienced with it the cold shivering impact of the First World War; witnessed (with what feelings?) its slow crumbling decay in the discontented winter of the post-war depression.

But it was never John Weir's habit to mourn the past. His vitality would not let him even in retirement and the last I heard of him was chairing a meeting for the Duchess of Atholl during her memorable anti-Munich campaign. But I confess I was surprised to find that he was then County Councillor John Weir.

He was familiar with all kinds and conditions of men, had a fine sense of a man's worth and a keen sense of character. He was a great man and an outstanding character in his day and generation: the teaching profession no longer attracts men of his calibre. His retirement marked the passing of the link between the Scots dominie proper and the Education Authority school-teacher. With his activity in the social and public life of the community he was a strength and an inspiration which has passed from the Scottish scene. Rural Scotland is the poorer; and when his place comes to be filled, as filled it must be, much water will have passed under the bridges and great and far-reaching changes will have taken place in the politico-economic life of the countryside.

TEACHERS

John Weir's female assistants were a mixed lot. Working up from Standard One we had Jenny Fotheringham, an angular nebby sort of lass who roared and screeched, had a great pair of ears, but, for all that, was conscientious and at times even kind-hearted.

We were set an essay one day: “What I should Like to be when I Grow Up.” We were told about it in the morning. I wanted to be—for the moment—a marine engineer. But not having reached my eighth birthday, I had only a very approximate idea of how the words should be spelled. I got my sister to write them out on a slip of paper at dinner-time and copied them out in my essay in the afternoon. I thought I would be commended for this. I didn’t know that in Miss Fotheringham’s eyes I was only the son of an estate worker and therefore had no right to aspire to any such ambition. One of the merchant’s sons expressed the longing to be a carter. A common carter! Miss Fotheringham was scandalised. But David’s reason for wishing to lower his status in the days that lay ahead appealed to me as being sane and sensible. I recall Jenny’s horrified voice as she read out David’s essay: “I would like to be a carter. I would like to lie in the bottom of the cart all day. I would not have much work to do.”

There wasn’t much to be said for Jenny Fotheringham’s class; but we were dreading to pass on through the curtain to Miss Innes. Miss Innes should have had the qualifying class next to Mr. Weir’s. She was an M.A.—as none of the others were. I think she was somewhat embittered. We considered her a holy terror. But under her rule I emerged as an expert in geography. When my interest was aroused I was an excellent scholar. Geography always held me. I could pore over a map for hours on end. So day after day I found myself the only pupil in the class who could come out to the floor and point out the Straits of Babelmandeb (my masterpiece), Formosa, the Straits of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego. The names were like music to me and easy to remember. The driest bit of geographical knowledge was like wine to my highly romantic notions of the universe. But Miss Innes concluded that what one could do the rest could do: and her tawse were never out of her grasp. The result of this was that my brightness brought me a lot of unpopularity.

Our next teacher, Miss Ferguson, was a gentle creature: we worshipped her. She was a plump rosy-cheeked woman in her thirties and I fancied she spoke as the angels spoke. This angel-association was probably due to the fact that she had been my first Sunday School teacher. As an infant I had once stood at her desk and sang: *There’s a Home for Little Children above the Bright Blue Sky*, for which histrionic and pious effort I had been rewarded with a black-striped ball. Miss Ferguson’s mission in life was, I think, to have taught nice little boys and girls sentimental Bible tales with a nice sentimental moral, the whole brightened by a selection of nice sentimental hymns. I didn’t know she was courting at this time, and I very much regret that I do not remember whom she was allowing to court her. But in the end, I believe—for it wasn’t in my day—he married her. Of such, undoubtedly, is the Kingdom of Heaven—which is a clear indication of the alarming extent to which I idealised her.

From Miss Ferguson we advanced to Miss Davidson who was, in many essential respects, a petite edition of Miss Jenny Fotheringham. In Miss Davidson’s class the comparative bemused obscurity into which I had gratefully sunk left me, and I emerged with a brilliance on the subject of general knowledge that astonished no one more than myself. Overnight I found myself a general knowledge expert. We were given little test cards on which were printed questions such as “What is a cygnet?” Such questions were, so to speak, jam for me. But the hard crusts of spelling and arithmetic soon revealed the soft condition of my mental teeth. Still, the glitter of an unfailing stream of correct answers to seemingly obscure questions did not readily wear off.

There was no holiday for children on Christmas day at Tulliallan. But on Christmas afternoon there was usually some slight attempt at a modification of the curriculum of unrelieved hard tack. Miss Davidson’s method was an attempt at a concert. She stood at her

desk with a bag of toffee balls and invited individual contributions, by way of song or recitation. About this time I had become conscious that I was a Braw Lad. Despite the dreadful handicap of shyness, I always had an ambition to shine as a vocalist. So after a lot of coaxing I ventured on the floor and announced to Miss Davidson that I would attempt *Gala Water*. She was very encouraging and so I faced the class and began an octave too high.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes
That wander through the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick Shaws
Can match the Lads o' Gala Water,
Braw, Braw lads.

But having scaled the almost impossible vocal heights of Ettrick Shaws in a manner more reminiscent of a not too-musical billy-goat, and having at the same time caught the black mischievous eyes of Violet Gillies, I was unable to continue, and was forced to retire in the most abject humiliation, only to be called back to receive a toffee ball for which I had now no appetite. But the experience cured me of any desire to air my vocal talents in public for the rest of my life—unfortunately my experience seems to have been unique!

With Mrs. Paterson we entered the qualifying stage—considered by many and certainly by Mrs. Paterson—as the most important in our scholastic life: that dark valley where the three R's prowl and growl, hungry for the grey matter of lost and bewildered children.

Mrs. Paterson was a honey. She could out-bawl Miss Innes. Her temper was continually getting the better of her normal good nature and the sense of her own importance the better of both. At bottom she was a conscientious teacher with nothing but the welfare of our little minds at heart. She was a middle-aged woman endowed with enormous vitality. But she hacked the most unnecessary lumps of nervous energy out of herself and worked herself into the most ridiculous paroxisms of frothing passion.

She had a special interest in the Tulliallan scholars since she was the daughter of Mr. Middlemas, the estate manager. She was rather proud of me because of my nature knowledge, and she was rather proud of her own. She inaugurated a Nature Note list which was posted up in the classroom and was entered every Monday morning. Who saw the first swallow or first heard the cuckoo and where and when was solemnly noted down. But such commonplaces were not for me. When my turn came on Monday morning it was something in the nature of a recital.

"And now, James, what did *you* observe over the week-end?"

"I saw a hoopoe."

"Marvellous! A hoopoe? Really! Where?"

"In the wood beside Donald's Dam."

"Splendid. What like was it?"

"Well, it wasn't so bright as the plate in Boraston's."

"No: they are rather highly coloured, James. But this is really splendid. A hoopoe . . ."

"Anything else, James?"

"I also saw a buzzard."

"A buzzard? Are you sure it was a buzzard?"

"Oh yes." (Just like that.) "It was flying quite high. But it wasn't an eagle and it was much too big for a hawk and it had sort of rounded wings."

"Yes: that *would* be a buzzard. And where did you see the buzzard, James?"

"Flying over the clearing at the Praybrae."

And so on and so forth. Later on in the day Mrs. Paterson attracted Mr. Weir's attention to her Nature Notes. I thought there was a rather cynical glint in his eye as he read the entry about the hoopoe. And there's just the chance that the cynicism wasn't altogether misplaced, for I had much too vivid an imagination ever to become a genuinely scientific naturalist.

But the dominie was never easily impressed.

Mrs. Paterson had one son, Archie, a rather small but bright and likeable lad a few years my junior. Jock and I met him one Sunday night on the banks of the Minnow Burn. We were displaying our prowess at burn-jumping to the disadvantage of Archie. But Archie wasn't to be beaten. He essayed a leap and landed in the middle of the burn. Fortunately it wasn't very deep at this part and the water didn't come much over Archie's brightly polished boots. We pointed out that since he had got his feet wet it might be better if he went home to his grandfather's at Windyhill, where his mother was visiting, as was her custom of a Sunday evening. But Archie wouldn't hear of it. He wasn't afraid of wet feet. And to prove himself as good as his word, he commenced to wade back and forth.

We thought him rather foolish and said so. But the incident passed off and we thought no more about it.

But the following week I got Mrs. Paterson's goat rather badly. I had my dour moments and I must have muttered something under my breath. For the moment I thought she was going to lay hands on me. But though her face was contorted with rage, she restrained herself. And then she pressed her anger from her lips in burning words.

"All some of you are good for is cutting little birds' throats and pushing small boys into burns."

I could say nothing in reply. But the injustice of it galled and rankled in me for years afterwards. There was never the same Tulliallan *esprit de corps* between us again.

But by the following Monday she seemed to have forgotten all about the incident and no doubt she had taken my furious blushing as a sure sign of guilt. But I could not forget.

She got out her sheet of paper, dipped her pen in the ink and poised herself expectantly.

"And now, James, what have you to contribute this morning?"

"Nothing."

It was little more than a surly growl, and the class, having reconciled itself to this weekly and rather boring display of superior nature knowledge, was startled.

But not so startled as Mrs. Paterson. She raised her eyebrows, and they could rise appreciably.

"What? Nothing, James?"

"*Nothing.*"

The growled negative was final and irrevocable.

Mrs. Paterson looked pained. Her hurt eyes held mine in reproach for a moment. And then I think she understood. That was the end of the Nature Notes as far as that year was concerned.

REFLECTIONS

My Tulliallan schooldays were happy and profitable. They lacked vivid dramatic quality. I had only one fight—when I attacked a boy older and bigger than myself. He had goaded me into fighting and against my instincts I fought. I gave him an unmerciful hammering. It was only when he was routed—or rather when he collapsed—that I realised how cheap my victory had

been. For though the lad was two years older than myself and fully a head taller, he was weak and dreadfully undernourished. He buried his white gaunt face, bruised and bleeding, in his arms and cried bitterly like a child. But though I was the popular hero of the moment I could have put my arms round him and wept, too. There were others whose faces I could have bashed in with real joy and satisfaction—but I was too cowardly, or insufficiently goaded, to do so.

And only once, and for a short spell, was I the victim of bullying. For no apparent reason a sadistic brute very much my physical superior took a delight in knocking me down, kneeling on my stomach and almost pressing my eyeballs into their recesses with his thumbs. It was a painful and unnerving experience. But as suddenly and inexplicably as I had received the attentions of this young sadist, I was left unmolested. And although there was much bullying at Tulliallan, this was my only experience of it.

Children ought not to be allowed to run free in a playground without adult supervision. Many children are psychically, if not physically maimed for the rest of their lives due to the outrages of certain types of sadistic bullies. It is too easily forgotten that every adult sadistic being was once a child in his mother's arms; and children even more than adults require protection from morbid and criminally warped natures. Dangerous morons and cretins—adolescent murderers and perverts are allowed far too much freedom and licence in schools and playgrounds. The evil they perpetrate is almost always of a psychological and incalculable nature. And nowhere is this more deadly and more secret than in the sexual sphere.

But in those days the soul was fed on the Shorter Catechism, and the mind on the three R's. No one imagined (or admitted) that children had sex problems, artistic-imaginative problems, religious problems and multifarious problems of the greatest importance and delicacy affecting the psyche. Certainly we were spared the crude bunglings of the so-called psychologists and problem-child experts. And maybe, in the rough balance of things, we were fortunate in this. Mr. Weir's justice was arbitrary, authoritative and manly; but it was tempered with gusto, shrewdness and a rare sense of humour and tonic wit.

When I think of the fushionless, denationalised ninnies in whose care the education of the modern Scots child is entrusted I would despair, did I not feel that soon education will be taken out of their inept hands altogether.

But, for the moment, it is sufficient to record that those Tulliallan schooldays were happy and profitable days. There was an absolute minimum of moral humbug, snobbery, hypocritical cant, jingoistic drivelling. Above all, there were no organised games.

And if we were given little or no valid history of our native land—to say nothing of our native parish—there was much profitable singing and readings in Braid Scots. But for this thanks are due to the last of the Scots dominies, John Weir.

IV
TOWN AND COUNTRY BUMPKINS

BOOLS AND PEERIES

OUR GAMES WENT in a curious cycle. For no apparent reason someone would start with bools (now being rapidly anglicised to marbles)—and suddenly there was a craze and everybody was playing. The big fellows were called plunkers: the general currency bools. Transparent plunkers, internally whorled in rainbow colours, were called glessies.

Our commonest game with the bools consisted of a circle into which each player put a bool. We played in rotation, the idea being to knock out a bool with a plunker. We had other variations of which spanie and knucklie were the most popular. My sister Jenny was a dab hand at the bools and always won a huge bagful during a spell of bool fever. Being an indifferent player myself, it was economical to have someone in the family who could make up for my losses.

But I was pretty good with the peerie. Nowadays I never see the kind we used. They were about the size of a Winter Nellis pear, grooves for the string, protected by a large sharp steel point and provided with a peg at the top to hold the loop of the string. The lassies spun them underhand: the boys overhand. Sometimes we would play a game in which we tried to knock our opponents out of a ring. But mostly we played them solo for the sheer joy of the spinning. Many a wet hour Jock and I spent spinning our peeries on the cement floor of the shed where the carriages were washed.

Knitting reins for the game of horses was fascinating, intricate, and provided an excellent standby against the rainy day.

All that was required was a used pirn (or thread bobbin), four brass cobbler's sprigs, a thin nail or darning needle and some wool. The four sprigs were hammered into the pirn equidistantly round the hole, the wool was cast on, then you worked round the sprigs lifting each individual stitch over with the nail or the needle.

There was a wee shop in the village that sold changing coloured wool for this very purpose. This wool made the prettiest reins. But as there were few of us able to afford this luxury we had to make shift with whatever wool we could lay our hands on. The results were usually far from artistic. In those days women's stockings were almost without exception knitted of five-ply black wool and men's drawers of a natural flesh shade. Socks were of more fancy shades—though black and flesh predominated. There might be variations of grey and brown and pepper and salt.

The reins, then, were made from the predominating blacks and washed-out pinks. My mother, however, was expert at knitting tops for my stockings. She could work out the most intricate patterns consisting maybe of thistles, stags' heads or a geometrical pattern of diamonds and dices and zigzagging bands. Because of this there were usually some odds and ends of brightly coloured wools—scarlets, purples and greens. But though these colours tended to relieve the drabness of the funeral blacks and the ministerial greys they could not produce the dazzling effects of the changing coloured wools. Not that it mattered a great deal, for I never managed to complete a set of reins. After two or three feet of laborious knitting, my enthusiasm waned and the pirn with its variegated tail was thrust in a drawer.

BOWS AND ARROWS

At Tulliallan we had games of our own. Two or three times a year we would go daft about a

bow and arrows. Jock and I had a good eye for a yew branch and the bows we made were no toys. If we had been as good with arrows we might have done some damage. But we were never able to hit on a proper and thoroughly satisfactory method of tipping the arrows with metal. We tried nails, old knife blades, awls and the like. No doubt some of them would have been satisfactory enough if we could have made certain of the arrow reaching its prey in its first flight. But our marksmanship was never quite good enough for that. And if the arrow struck a tree or a stone or fell on very hard ground the tip usually required extensive repairs before it could be used again. Still our bows provided us with excellent sport and though we never bagged a rabbit we occasionally managed to bag a bird—and as a standby we could always draw blood from Harry Gray's stirks. Maybe I pull the long bow in saying we drew blood. We never used tipped arrows on the nowts—but even at that we more than tickled their hides.

When we hadn't bows, we usually had slings. These too were almost lethal in their efficiency. They were cut from stout green stick (usually ash) and the motive power was supplied by several lengths of elastic. We got the elastic from golf balls we found about the course. A ball called the 'Silver Challenger' was most prized. Near the core it provided a few feet of strong broad elastic and it was from a few plies of this that our best slings were made. The pocket for the stones was provided from the soft tongue of an old boot of which there was never any great scarcity.

As we grew older we came into possession of air guns. These provided us with endless entertainment indoors and out of doors. From the window of the Wee Room I shot (sometimes for hours on end) at the sparrows perched on the top of the netting of the hen run. Sparrows were vermin of course; and theoretically I had no compunction at shooting them—or at them. But I remember the feeling of remorse that almost overcame me after I shot my first sparrow. I knew I had hit it, for I knocked it off its perch. But even as it fell it seemed to recover and flew up the garden; then it faltered and dropped among the green shaws of the early potatoes. I climbed out the window to retrieve it. I found it lying on its back between the drills. It was dead: a pin-prick of mist was gathering in the eyes. But the body was soft and warm; and there in the centre of the breast was the red puncture where the bullet had penetrated.

BLOOD SPORT

I am one of those humanitarian people congenitally incapable of blood sport. In given circumstances I am sure I would tear a rabbit apart with my bare hands and attempt to eat it raw. And though deeply pacifist in my nature, again in certain circumstances I would shoulder a rifle and go out to kill or be killed. But, as a sport, I cannot enjoy killing animals. A few years ago when visiting a farmer friend in Galloway I succumbed to his offer to take the gun to the hill for an afternoon's sport with the rabbits—or any other game that happened to come my way.

My instinct was all against it but I thought maybe I was a bit squeamish. So I took the gun and went out. Presently I spotted a rabbit nibbling grass on a knoll beside a stream. Its back was to me. It was a fair distance away but I didn't want to approach any nearer in case it should hear me. I took careful aim. The rabbit toppled into the burn. When I got up it was in the process of a double death from drowning and the shot that had shattered its hindquarters.

I felt mean and contemptible. And if to feel so in such a circumstance is a sign of weakness and sentimentality there's nothing I intend doing about it.

FISHING

I feel much the same about fishing as a sport. I've tried it several times; but I always feel happier when I draw a blank. It's a low-down business fishing: there's nothing heroic about it. The skill consists in deceiving the fish that the fly or bait hasn't a barbed hook lurking in it. It's a miserable business despite all the knowledge and skill and patience required to successfully complete the deception. I'd rather blow the hindquarters off a rabbit any day.

The best day's fishing I ever had was when the Minnow Burn burst its banks, due to an unprecedented overflow from the Moor Loch.

Jock and I were walking up through the park to see the break-through when we suddenly found perch and trout leaping on the grass where they had been carried down by the first flood and were still managing to eke out an existence in a couple of inches of water. We ran home for baskets and had no difficulty in filling them. That night and the next day we ate fried trout and red-finned perch till we were sick of them.

RECREATION

There was no end to our opportunities for recreation. On rainy days we had numerous out-houses in addition to the byres, the stables, the hen-houses, the granaries and the coach-houses in which to pass the time. There was nearly always plenty of hay or straw in the byre sheds—especially in winter time—and it provided us with endless fun. Indeed it was difficult at times to decide just how we would amuse ourselves. Sometimes we made clay models at the clay dump in the byre yard: sometimes we amused ourselves in the sand pit; and we had huts of brushwood and dens and retreats in nearly every wood.

Tulliallan was a small boy's Eden—despite the serpents of gamekeepers.

We indulged in a lot of foolhardy adventure and from many of our ploys we were lucky to live to tell the tale. We rowed in the loch in a rotten leaky boat; we traversed deep water on ice that threatened to give way at every timorous slip; we climbed out on the dead limbs of trees after birds' nests and later breathed with relief that the branch hadn't snapped under our weight and flung us thirty or forty feet to the ground.

Wet or dry, cold or warm, we had always several choices by way of recreation. I can remember no time when the feeling of having nothing to do or having nowhere to go hung heavily on our hands.

It is very different with the city child whose world, in comparison, is like a prison house. But even the city child's lot is enviable compared with that of the child whose barren lot is to spend its growing years in those wilderness housing schemes created by the councils and the municipalities and the big speculative builders. Where can the heart of a child take root in the square miles of uniform brick boxes, uniform cabbage patches, uniform streets, uniform iron palings? True, these housing schemes give the child more sunlight, less dense fog, more cubic feet of air and walls less germ impregnated and bed-bug infested. But into what manner of maturity will children develop whose young years are deprived of every vestige of wild nature and nothing but the pale simulacrum of Mr. Middleton's substitute remains?

No child's heart revels and is uplifted in artificial (and mostly hog-mindedly unimaginative) playgrounds. A youngster—even a suburban youngster—would a thousand times rather have the opportunity of making its own swing, finding the plank and selecting the pivot for its own

see-saw and climbing the natural ladders of the trees. The only real escape such children have is the world of dreary anæmic Hollywood pornography, puerile moral pabulum and the brutalitarian buffoonery of the gangster-crime-G-man set-up—all of which is but partly redeemed by the joyous genius of Mr. Walt Disney.

We can't all be brought up in the country. But the legislation of the immediate future will have to face the problem of overcoming the dichotomy of the town v. the country. Someone has pointed out the truth that the town bumpkin lost in the country is more ridiculous and pathetic than the country bumpkin lost in the town. Such town bumpkins as we encountered on Tulliallan certainly impressed us that way.

They were lost souls. And to us they were poor, helpless, and ignorant. They didn't even know that nettles stang and briars tore; they didn't know an oak from an ash or a greenfinch from a yellow-hammer (they didn't even know the difference between a Black Leghorn and a Buff Orpington). They didn't know how to use a bow and arrow (far less make them) or how to kill a rabbit with the side of the hand. They couldn't tell hips from haws or bullocks from bulls or either from milch cows.

We found that almost all town children were lost, bewildered and afraid in the country; but no less than we country youngsters were lost, bewildered and afraid in the town. I remember going to Alloa with Willie Russell to purchase a Meccano set, and becoming so afraid and terror struck by the strangeness of the surroundings that I would sooner have entered a cave of lions than put my head inside the door of that emporium.

Ridiculous; but such is the result of the division of town and country. But we never longed for the glitter and glamour or the city as city youngsters must surely long for the green freedom of summer meadows.

Perhaps we were young barbarians. We were incapable of polished manners. We knew nothing of social etiquette; we hated new clothes and the feeling of being dressed was purgatory. We weren't overmuch enamoured of soap and water. Our one sartorial ambition was to own and keep in good condition a great pair of tacketty steel-tipped boots and we preferred dubbin to boot polish. We loved an old jacket so that we could use every inch of space between the lining and the cloth to stuff away our equipment of string, nails, knives, wire, slings, peeries, bools, candle stumps, matches, bootlaces, magnifying glasses, boxes for birds' eggs and all the incredible junk we found so useful at one time or another. We had to be prepared for every contingency: climbing trees or barbed wire fences; crawling into the caverns of rhododendron clumps; cleaning turnips; mucking byres and loose boxes; riding in muddy carts; playing among clay, sand and lime; and generally no thought of clothes or cleanliness prevented us from indulging in whatever work, game or ploy took our fancy.

To the stranger we were wild and shy as deer and in appearance as unkempt as tramps or tinkers. But we were as happy as the day was long and wouldn't have called the king our cousin for all the tea in China.

V
A DAY'S SHOOTING

FROSTY MORNING

IT HAD BEEN raining for a few days—steady, seeping rain. But a heavy frost had set in through the night and in the morning, about half-past seven, the ground was iron-bound. We could feel it in our faces and especially on the tips of our ears, Jock and I, as we set off through the wood by the hen-run to the meeting place for the beaters—the young plantations at the foot of the Windyhill brae.

The frost had not penetrated deeply into the ground below the trees; the feet broke through the crisp frosty layer and sank into the mould and soft earth. This wasn't a good sign. If the sun came out with any strength by eleven o'clock conditions underfoot would be most unpleasant. All this was noted silently. It was part of the almost unconscious lore we had gathered.

We were not apprehensive. We were in good time and in excellent spirits. Rain would have spoiled everything; and almost any kind of weather was preferable to rain.

Once out on the metalled road to the Castle, the iron shods on our boots rang with a clear steady rhythm. It was grand to be out in the half-light of the early morning, our breaths steaming in the frosty air. And we each had a good piece in our pockets and a sturdy stick in our hands.

Daylight was breaking when we reached the meeting place. We were first. But we hadn't waited long before The Bear arrived with his black retrievers. He was spruced up in a pea-green knickerbocker suit. His small leggings were brightly polished; his moustache neatly trimmed. He was more than usually proud and officious.

"I like to see you boys keeping time."

"Aye . . ."

"Where the hell's they Kincardine dirt? Did you no' see any o' them on the road?"

"There's some o' them coming now."

"So it is: I'll waken them up."

The Bear swaggered off importantly to meet the first of the Kincardine boys who had been hired for the day as beaters.

A SARTORIAL SENSATION

From the opposite direction came Geordie Fyfe on his bicycle. George wasn't in the best of trim for some reason or other.

His dress intrigued us. He was sporting a pair of striped morning trousers a few sizes too big for him. His blue fisherman's guernsey was also to the big side. His jacket—or coat, we could not decide which—was comically big for him. It almost reached to his knees and had an enormous vent at the back. The tails had obviously been much sat on: they curled fantastically. A sturdy thorn was attached to his wrist with a leather bootlace. There was a part-seaman, part-dandy combination of roll and swagger about Geordie's walk that intrigued us immensely. It was obvious that he had given some thought to his dress for we had never seen him like this before. Just how practical the thought was that Geordie had given his ensemble we were to discover later in the day.

When The Bear came up with the Kincardine boys he gave Geordie a curt nod: there was no love lost between them; and Geordie, much to The Bear's secret annoyance, maintained a

curious but most effective air of cynical nonchalance. He seemed to have no interest in the proceedings about to commence.

Geordie had much experience as a beater: he knew all the answers long before The Bear had ever thought of the questions. The Bear had never been able to get the better of him and indeed I think he feared Geordie since he rarely risked engaging in verbal encounter.

But Geordie soon faded into the background as more beaters arrived and the other keepers came forward for their instructions.

THE JUNGLE

We were to beat the two young plantations of larch and fir bordering the main drive to the Castle from the West Lodge. This was mainly for the convenience of the Castle guests who would have a short walk since they had just breakfasted. From the drive on the left and the Windyhill fields on the right they could blaze away at the pheasants.

This was the first time I had beat through this plantation and I was not to forget it readily. The trees were very small and closely planted—it had not yet been thinned—and it was not possible to walk between them. The only possible method was to get down on hands and knees and crawl under the lowest branches.

There were times when it became necessary to crawl through on the stomach. Even then our troubles weren't at an end. The branches of the young spruce have a resiliency of finely-tempered steel. They were ever liable to whip back on our faces, stinging them painfully and sometimes lacerating them. And then the pine needles worked down our necks. . .

And all the while we had to keep up a shouting and yelling so that the pheasants would be frightened enough to take wing the moment they were free from cover.

From the liliputian depths of our tortuous jungle we could hear the guns blazing away merrily: intimation that the gentry were enjoying good sport!

It was part of our duty, should any bird fall into the plantation, dead or wounded, that it be retrieved and carried forward to the end of the beating stretch.

It so happened that I was next to Geordie Fyfe in the beating line. The Bear had instructed him to take the outside edge and help to keep the line in order. This suited Geordie excellently for he had no intention, if he could avoid it, of crawling and burrowing his way through the small trees. Indeed we hadn't gone more than a few yards when Geordie worked his way to the edge of the plantation where he could walk at his ease and yet be in a position to dodge back among the bushes should The Bear reappear.

There came a point where the trees were sparser and I was able to witness an incident that threw a revealing light on the significance of Geordie's dress.

A shot pheasant thudded at his feet. He glanced about him quickly—and his neck movements were incredibly swift—bent down, seized the bird with his left hand, wrenched out the tail feathers with his right (it was a magnificent cock) and dropped it into his inside pocket.

It was the work of deft seconds. I had scarcely grasped its significance when Geordie had nipped back into the planting shouting with a rare zest.

He edged his way over to me for he realised I had seen him.

"Not a word now, Jimmy."

"No . . ."

"Not a cheep and I'll see you right."

We emerged from the second stretch of planting in a most wretched and uncomfortable state. The keepers were already gathering the bag into a pile: rabbits, an odd hare and about a cart load of pheasants. Such gentry as we saw beamed with pleasure and satisfaction. The day's shooting had begun with a propitiousness scarcely to be expected: the augur for an enjoyable and profitable day had been confirmed.

BLOOD

We were relieved to find that our next beat lay through stubble fields. The sun was up over the horizon of fir-tops and the ground was beginning to soften.

There wasn't much to be gained beating through the fields; but as they lay between us and the next planting they might as well be covered profitably. There would be some rabbits, the certainty of a few hares and the possibility of a covey of partridges.

We stretched out to cover the field and the guns which accompanied us were in the ratio of about one gun to three beaters.

The gentry seemed well pleased with the arrangement. The first round had been child's play really—or simple slaughter—a mere discharging of pellets into the air as the birds came thick overhead. Now a sudden hare, louping off at a zigzag course presented a more difficult target. So difficult indeed that only an odd one came down.

Unfortunately a couple of hares fell in my line of advance and they had to be picked up and carried forward. They were too long (or I was too small) to carry them by the legs. I had to sling them over my shoulders. One had got the shot in the stomach and its guts were hanging out and the warm sickly smell of riddled intestine wasn't over-pleasant round the neck. Both animals were bleeding and the blood oozed on to my shoulders and dripped down the back of my jacket.

It was a long trudge through the fields. The footing became very soft and the feet got balled up with soft clay. Before I had come to the end of the beat the hares had become an almost intolerable and decidedly uncomfortable burden. The smell of blood and guts remained with me all day. Even across the years the memory is distinctly nauseating.

The next planting was not so great an ordeal as the first for it was older and had undergone its first thinning. Here were the galvanised feeding bins for the pheasants and it was noticeable how tame they were. As we advanced on them, they seemed surprised and when they finally ran off swiftly there was evidence of bewilderment in their speed.

Shots were few; and The Bear, sensing what was happening, came blustering across the line of advance commanding us to shout and bawl and yell at our loudest. To add to the inferno we rattled every bin we came to with our sticks till one would have thought that every living creature within a mile's radius would have been scared.

DOWN IN THE FOREST

By now we were in the fringe of the forest around the Moor Loch and here we experienced the most gruelling part of the day's beating.

This part of the forest, beneath the mighty Scots firs was, from the viewpoint of the beater, a formidable wilderness of brobdingnagian rhododendrons. A tangled and closely interwoven

mass of bushes might well cover a hundred square yards.

Our instructions were emphatic and might not be ignored on pain of the direst penalty. The roddys provided excellent cover for game and so it would defeat the usefulness of the beat were any attempt made to circumnavigate them. We must plunge into them as small Tobriand Islanders (presumably) plunge into the South Sea surf.

Presumably! True, we could scarcely have got a worse soaking. The polished leaves of the roddys, but lately furred with a night's white frost, now dripped an icy cold water. And the writhing bony limbs—they were perhaps more like tentacles and their presence could never be anticipated with an intelligent certainty—tripped us up or barked our shins.

Jock who was beside me—we always tried to get as close together as possible—had an accident that might have been more serious than it was discomfiting. Plunging through some low-lying roddys, he suddenly gave a yell and disappeared. I struggled to his assistance to find that he had fallen into an old ditch, completely screened by the undergrowth and containing about two to three feet of rotting mould, stagnant water and slimy subsoil.

Considering the tumult of shouting and yelling that was going on along the line, Jock's cry was never heard. He was submerged to the buttocks and still sinking when I got to him; and it was only after much effort that I got him out. He was in a dreadful mess and the sour stink of the long-stagnant muck was overpowering.

But there was no time to stop for commiseration. Jock had to clean himself with his bonnet and a bunch of roddy leaves as best he could and move on.

Jock and I knew most of the ground and, though roddys remain roddys, we were fairly skilled in getting through them. The Kincardine boys blundered through in desperation and the whole advance began to slow down. Soon the shouting died away and only sporadic calls and an odd shot could be heard. Occasionally we heard The Bear bawling orders in his best sergeant-major manner. But, for the most part, beaters were too tired and miserable to respond to them.

The day was wearing on and we were hungry. We ate our pieces as we could—biting off as much as our mouths would hold and thrusting the remainder into our pockets. We wondered what the time was and judged the sun, with a fair degree of accuracy, that it must be near eleven o'clock.

We were near the end of this particular beat—we could see daylight and the surface of the North Loch ahead—when Geordie Fyfe suddenly made his reappearance.

He seemed to materialise out of the air. He motioned to us to keep quiet and plunged into a huge roddy behind us.

"What's the matter wi' Geordie?" asked Jock.

"I think he'll be planking a load o' pheasants—but don't say a word."

That was precisely what Geordie was doing. He emerged looking half as slim again, a faint derisive grin on his hard features.

"If you young beggars say a word . . ." he threatened, and disappeared as he had come.

THE WOUNDED DOE

We had a long, gruelling trek in front of us. Through the forest along the low side of the North Loch, through another nasty planting at the head of the loch, then back through the fallow fields and the strips of planting on the high side of the Loch.

Going down this last beat through the forest I found myself between Sir James Sievewright and The Bear. Both had guns. Near the end we raised a deer. It bounded up almost at my feet—a young doe. Sir James hesitated, taken by surprise, blundered and missed with both barrels. He shouted to The Bear. The doe had a good hundred yards start and was getting into her stride; but The Bear gave her both barrels and she went down on her knees.

"Good shot," cried Sir James. "You've got her."

"I'm afraid I only winged her, Sir James."

He was right. The doe staggered up and disappeared into the hollow beyond. By the time we got up we could see her make for the planting.

"I must have got her in the hind leg—but we'll get her later on, Sir James."

"Still, it was a good shot . . ."

The Bear brushed at his moustache with the back of his hand.

Twice the doe doubled back on us in the planting. She knew that the guns waited on her the moment she emerged from cover.

The second time we went through, having got a round cursing from The Bear, I came so close on her that I struck her with my stick. It was then I saw where she had been wounded. The hind hoof dangled from a piece of skin and a piece of thin white splintered shank protruded. The hind leg had been shattered. We set up a great yelling and a moment or two later a couple of shots rang out and we knew they had got her.

We saw her lying beside the track later on. She was little bigger than a calf, her fud little better than a buck rabbit's. Somehow I felt sorry I had struck her with the stick.

The last long trek before midday, through the grass lands, brought us a few hares, some partridges and odd snipe.

It was now after twelve and as soon as we reached the drive the gentry were conveyed back to the Castle for lunch.

The beaters proceeded to the loan behind Gillies's lodge (Gillies was second keeper) to await the trap from the castle and the baker's van from Kincardine.

TRAGIC RELIEF

Our lunch never varied. From the Castle came a huge black pot like a witch's cauldron filled with champit tatties (mashed potatoes and butter); from the village came pies and lemonade. We got a pie, heaped with the potato mash and a bottle of lemonade. After four hours arduous work, this was supposed to sustain growing lads for another four hours.

When we arrived the pies and lemonade were forward, but the potatoes had not yet arrived. Knowing we would eat our pie if it was distributed, Gillies ordered that there be no distribution till the potatoes arrived.

There was nothing we could do about it; and as we were all pretty tired and footsore we sat down—despite the dampness—under the hawthorn hedge to await the arrival of the trap.

We groused and cursed while we waited and Geordie Fyfe simulated a great show of wrath and indignation which everyone but the keepers thoroughly enjoyed. Geordie's picturesque and colourful oaths and obscenities were a delight at any time.

Ultimately the trap arrived with the cauldron of mash. It was placed in the middle of the loan. Gillies ordered us into a queue and took off the white cloth that served for a lid. At this point he remembered the need for a spoon to serve out the ration and he went into the house to

get one.

It was then the tragedy happened. It took place so quickly that few of us, with the exception of Geordie, realised what had happened till it was all over. A big curly black retriever trotted forward, sniffed the pot and lifted its leg. But by the time Geordie's boot had dirled on its rump, the damage had been done. The dog ran howling into the house and almost upset Gillies at his gate.

A fearful altercation ensued between the keepers and Geordie: Geordie demanding that the dog be shot and that the trap be sent back for another supply of potatoes; and Gillies telling Geordie that he would shoot him the next time he kicked his dog and since when had he become so particular about his food. They were like to come to blows when The Bear ordered an extra ration of pies.

But there weren't enough pies to go round twice; and Geordie wasn't going to lose his opportunity of an extra pie arguing with Gillies.

We all crowded round the van. Geordie looked down and saw me at his side.

"Shove that pie in your pocket," he whispered.

"Hey there: afore you start handing out extra pies, what about this laddie that hasn't had his first yet? Come on there, damn you: hand ower a couple o' pies: and a couple for me, and none o' your bloody lip or I'll take every pie in your van."

So Geordie and I had three pies each. And as we strolled up the loan, taking a bite of pie and a drink of lemonade alternately, Geordie said to me:

"That's for keeping your mouth shut, Jimmy. I'd give you a fine cock pheasant—only your father would want to ken a' about it. And what's a pie tae us when they beggars'll be guzzling and boozing in the Castle for another hour yet?"

I said it was a pity about the potatoes.

"Ah—what the hell's the odds?" said Geordie, as half of a pie disappeared into his mouth. "They were stane bloody cold onywey."

WILD DUCK

Below the lodge was a small dam, and here a large number of ducks had been penned. The gentry having arrived back from lunch were to be treated to a spot of duck shooting.

As the keepers went down and released the ducks there was no need for beaters, so we stood and watched the sport. The ground rose steeply from the dam to where the guns were placed, and as the ducks came up they could not overcome the rise of the ground and so presented an easy target. Very few escaped and there was quite a successful slaughter. They were heavy hand-reared birds and their plumed sleek bodies thudded on the hard ground with a dull sickening sound.

The sound was evidently pleasing to the gentry, however, and they beamed with satisfaction. Perhaps they were thinking of the dinner and the roast duck that would almost certainly appear on the menu. One tall gaunt fellow who looked like a lawyer—or so I fancied: his social position was probably a good deal higher—slung his leather cartridge case at me. This meant I would have to be at his side for the rest of the afternoon. The bag was heavy and in any case I resented being his caddie—but orders were orders and I had to carry on.

GRAND FINALE

For the most part, the afternoon's beating lay through grass and stubble and ploughed land, tiring enough but of no great interest. The grand finale took place at the Old Castle, which was almost surrounded by young plantings. But it wasn't so successful as it might have been. The sun had gone and great masses of dark clouds were piling up from the west. A slight breeze had sprung up and the rain wasn't very far away.

We beat two of the plantings when it was decided that the light was too bad for further shooting. We were not sorry to hear this. We were tired, wet, leg-weary, hungry and, in many physical ways, thoroughly miserable.

But the day's work was not yet over. There was game to carry to the trap. After that we had to go to the office at Blackhall for our pay.

Darkness was gathering perceptibly and the first drops of rain were beginning to fall as we stood outside the factor's office.

We were kept waiting, cold and shivering, for no one was in any hurry to attend to juvenile beaters hired for the day.

At last Peter Clark came hurrying out of the office with that nervous spidery motion that was always his. He called out our names and handed each of us our wage—a florin.

The gentry had long since departed for the Castle to bath and change for dinner. We hadn't cost Sir James more than a couple of pounds for his day's sport. We had taken more than a couple of pounds out of our hides and our clothes and footwear. And some of us would have colds and require a couple of visits from Dr. Love.

The Kincardine boys departed home and Jock was anxious to get changed for he was still in a filthy and wet state from his adventure in the stagnant ditch.

THE HARVEST IS GARNERED

My father had charge of the game larder and I went across to see what it looked like. It had lately been part of the granary. The walls had been lined with wooden strips into which hooks had been driven.

The game cart was unloading at that moment. There was a heap of birds and game on the cement floor and my father, assisted by one of the keepers, was busy hooking them in classified rows. Cock pheasants, hen pheasants, drakes and ducks, hares and rabbits; woodcock, wood pigeons, snipe, capercailzie and partridges.

It was a most depressing sight. Many of the birds had been shot at too close range. What in the morning had been a lusty live cock pheasant, was now a bloody lead-riddled pulp of shattered bone and torn feather. The rows of birds looked scraggy and pathetic, their necks ludicrously elongated by the weight of their bodies. Many of these birds, hand-fed and reared under the domestic hen, had been as tame and friendly as any barn-yard fowl.

As I trudged home through the darkness with half an ear listening to Willie MacKay tuning his pipes in readiness for the Castle dinner, I brooded on the fact that I had never tasted a pheasant. Nor, for all the thousands I helped to drive to the guns, did I ever taste one during my stay at Tulliallan.

VI
WINTER NIGHTS

THE TOY BOX

WINTER NIGHTS were short and warm and friendly. When very young I played on a strip of mat before the high kitchen dresser and the kitchen bed. Toys were not plentiful—not even cheap toys. The advent of the low-priced chain stores has satiated the modern child's sense of wonder and romance.

My toy-box was rather a medley of odds and ends. I had a few red-coats made of some stucco-like substance. They were rather chipped and broken but I was an exceedingly tender medical officer and a not too exacting colonel. Then there was a fine model of an elephant covered in the right shade of slate grey felt, complete with a couple of moth holes that revealed the stuffing and part of the little wooden cylinder that produced the squeak. I was rather fond of Jumbo: he was lonely, long suffering and full of incommunicable wisdom. There was a cheap, somewhat shabby Teddy bear of the traditional straw colour: a tubby little horse with rexine harness and a farm cart (English style) filled with picture blocks. These were the main items of the toy-box and they provided delight for more than six years.

TURNIP LANTERNS

Winter was ushered in by the making of a turnip lantern. There is more fun in making a turnip lantern than in fooling around with electric torches. There was the very real chance of getting a nasty cut: there was the inevitable row for making a mess with the inside of the turnip. But when the inside of a big symmetrical Swede had been laboriously hollowed out with a pen-knife there came the chance to display real artistry. Crescent moons, half-moons, new moons and a variety of stars were cut through the thin shell. A real lantern would be fitted with pieces of coloured glass, but when glass couldn't be got in suitable pieces, coloured papers were sometimes fitted on the outside with pins. A few ventilation holes were put in the lid, a piece of string threaded through for a handle, a stump of candle fitted in the bottom: then everything was set for a try-out.

To be effective the night had to be really dark and the more lanterns that were out the better the display. They made a brave show as we ran about with them. And though they didn't shed much light they would encourage us to venture into the wood. And then maybe a gust of wind would come along and blow out the candle and we suddenly felt lonely and afraid.

But it was splendid fun—and maybe the greatest fun was in the making of the lanterns. By the end of the week the shell of the turnip would have shrunk considerably and it would begin to smell unpleasantly. The next thing you knew was that someone had thrown it in the midden. And so you began to search for a new turnip and keep your eyes open for a stump of candle.

PRACTICAL JOKES

Sometimes Jock and Davie and I had sport with Davie's father. Bob usually went down the village at nights. He would come home and shave and change into his 'shifting' clothes. This was the time we played our pranks on him. Bob Campbell was a strong, vigorous man with a bold and rather caustic sense of humour.

Davie had brought from the village the time-honoured prank of the button, the pin and the

length of thread. The gentle tapping on the window didn't annoy Bob much, but he would simulate great wrath and come to the door and hurl the most blood-curdling oaths and threats into the darkness.

In the end we grew blasé about these theatrical imprecations. It was Davie who had a brainwave. We would get the zinc bath out of the wash-house, fill it with water, place it on the doorstep and then from a safe distance hurl a fairly decent stone at the door.

Like most country folks, Bob padded about the house in his 'stocking soles': only when he was actually ready to go out would he put on his boots.

When the scene was set we retired a safe distance and Davie hurtled the stone. It hit the door with a fearful thud. We stood still: but I think we trembled a little. In a second the door was wrenched open. Then there was a frightful clatter as Bob fell headlong over the bath. Besides soaking himself, barking his shins and hitting the ground none too gently, he also got a bit of a fright. The bellow of rage and pain and shock he emitted must have been heard at the Cross.

There was no simulation about that roar. We took to our heels and, regardless of the darkness and the fact that we couldn't see where we were going, fairly catapulted into the wood.

But Bob had picked himself up and was close on our heels. Then he must have stubbed his toe on a root for he let out another blood-curdling yell that put the shivers through us. Then we heard him smashing through the bushes. This time he was swearing to some unholy purpose. The very air became sulphurous and reeked of hell.

But he didn't catch any of us. In this we were exceedingly fortunate. So great was his wrath that had he done so we might have suffered some permanent injury—if we had been lucky enough to survive. Bob Campbell was an exceedingly fiery-tempered man. His was the lion-hearted courage that knows no physical fear and brooks no consequences. It was said of him, with considerable truth, that he didn't give a damn for anybody from Sir James Sievewright down. After the incident of the zinc bath I took elaborate precautions to avoid him.

THE BEASTS

About eight o'clock on winter nights my father went to have a look round the beasts, and I was ever keen to accompany him. There was always a feeling of adventure about stepping from the warm well-lit kitchen into the night.

Surrounded as we were by trees, the nights could be very dark and the blackness seemed to have a tangibility. But other nights the moon would be out and the sky would throb and glitter with its myriad stars. Our steps would ring on the frozen ground and the shrubs and grass would sparkle with the white hoar.

Two things remain memorable from these nights: the darkness and the silence. Sometimes the silence would be lacerated by the hell-hoot of an owl—or more remotely by honking geese beating their way towards the river. But generally the silence would reign vast and sometimes awesome. In the stillness of the night there can be magic and wonder and a peace beyond words or thought: but in the heart of it there is mystery and terrible loneliness. I was never afraid of the night and the darkness for I was born to it and it was as natural as eating and sleeping. But I always ventured into the night with a feeling of tension and heightened awareness.

Moonlit nights were magical and bathed the landscape in enchantment. But it was a cold,

rather eerie enchantment. I remember one night being sent to Windyhill with a bottle of medicine that had been sent down from Alloa by the vet. My sister had got it from the station master. I wasn't too keen on the journey even though there was a full moon and a clear sky, but I would not show fear. I went along by the edge of the Gardeners' Wood and the Cuddy Park. The grass was white and sparkling and the wood dark and sinister. Away to the left the round backs of the Ochil Hills were humped in silence. There was a nimbus round the moon and the faint suggestion of a lunar rainbow. It was a night that seemed to have much in common with R. M. Ballantine's *Hudson Bay* which I had just been reading. Trudging up through the fields I imagined I was in the frozen North, encased in furs and shod with snowshoes. I was following the spoor of a white fox while at the same time I was keeping a sharp look-out for signs of bear tracks or evidence of wolves.

When at last I got to Windyhill there was no sign of life anywhere and the place was in darkness. I knocked at Mr. Middlemas's door but it was a long time before he answered. He must have been in bed for when at last he opened the door he was clad in a long white night-gown and he didn't seem too pleased to see me.

I began to think it was much later than it really was, for though early bedding was the custom in Tulliallan as in most country districts, I couldn't believe they were bedded by eight o'clock at Windyhill.

There was a thorn hedge on one side of the road and I was about to start running when I heard a footstep on the other side of the hedge. I stopped and listened. The footsteps stopped. I took a few paces forward and the following steps rustled in the leaves behind the hedge. I was being followed—there could be no doubt about that. The hedge was too thick to allow me to see what was trailing. But to tell the truth I didn't stay to look: I took to my heels. Fear gave fleetness to my flying feet, but through the hedge I could hear my pursuer, to whom I was now attributing the wildest and most murderous intentions, keeping pace with me.

Suddenly the hedge gave way to an open wire fence. A young colt cantered on ahead, kicking its hind legs in the air and giving vent to the most raucous and derisive nicker I have ever heard. But though I did not feel like laughing—indeed I was on the verge of tears—I realised that that horse had a sense of fun.

My father never seemed to be in any hurry to get to the byres at night. With his hands in his cross-pockets and his trouser legs stuffed into the tops of his unlaced boots, he proceeded there at a leisurely dander—so unlike his smart gait at other times. And invariably he would 'diddle' or hum a fiddle tune.

His favourite, as I remember, was *The Shuttle that flies at the Weaving* (a tune I was afterwards to know in piping as *The Hills of Glenorchy*). I don't remember any of the words except a last line which he always enunciated with a delightful verve: *And doon the burnside he gaed screevin'*.

These nights were intimate with a deep filial warmth. There were few words spoken for words in these circumstances were in the nature of an irrelevance.

Sometimes there was a treacle and bran mash mixed in a wooden vat and smelling like a brewery, sometimes a turnip or two and always a bunch of fodder. I usually dealt out the fodder and delighted to press up between the cows in the stalls with a manly, "G'up there, lass." Sometimes I would lean over the wooden boxes where the calves were penned and let them suck my fingers till my father would come with his inevitable:

"D'you think we'll awa' hame, laddie?"

BOWZER

For a number of years there was a great tiger cat that lived in the byre. He was a magnificent brute and could poach a rabbit as well as any dog. When we brought him home he often jumped in the room window with a full-grown rabbit in his mouth.

At the time he was in the byres, however, he was quite unapproachable to any one but myself. I don't know how we became friends but I used to lie and play with him for hours on end. Whenever any one came on the scene he would be off like a streak of tawny lightning. For his size and bulk his speed was amazing.

Bowzer wasn't always in the byre at night: his habits were nomadic and irregular. But if he were anywhere about he always came and clawed at my stockings. Sometimes he would follow me back to the house when a word from my father would send him streaking off into the night.

We had a magnificent Persian cat at home. Beauty was her name. She was an aristocratic but gentle dame and never had any kittens. I hadn't the same affection for her as I had for Bowzer. But then Beauty never paid much attention to me and disliked being pawed. She must have eaten poison about the woods for she came home sick one morning and died.

Her successor, of the same breed and pedigree, was a splendid Tom called Jellicoe. He was an intelligent and friendly beast, easily trained to do a variety of tricks. One summer afternoon, when he was dozing on a dyke close by the house, the gamekeeper came along and emptied a couple of barrels into him.

It was shortly after this that Bowzer was brought down from the byre. We found he despised milk, liked his tea strong with plenty of sugar and had an inordinate passion for cheese. His sweet tooth soon led him to master the technique of opening 8-lb. biscuit tins. For a time it was thought that I was the guilty party. But Bowzer's intelligence did not take him the length of replacing the lid and he was ultimately found out. After this he got his ration of biscuits with the rest of the family.

Bowzer earned his keep: he was not tolerated for purely sentimental reasons. Keeping hens in the garden encouraged rats. But Bowzer made short work of them for he was an excellent ratter. My mother had no great opinion of dogs. Once, when working on a Galloway farm, she had bought a dog whose qualities as a ratter had been loudly praised. But the rats came and chased him away from his dinner with the result that she had to stand guard over his dish in order to prevent him dying of starvation. It appears that this kindness was not altogether lost on the brute for he became an excellent cattle dog. Finally he became so courageous that he bit an infant sister as she lay in the cradle—whereupon he was unceremoniously dragged out and shot.

When we knew we were leaving Tulliallan, Bowzer was handed over to the village grocer who was also plagued with rats and who had tried several breeds of dogs without success. Inside a week Bowzer had liquidated the rats. But it was not till about a month later that the grocer discovered he had eaten his way into the heart of a hundredweight cheese (from the side screened by the wall) and consumed a very considerable poundage of his finest sweet biscuits.

The last time I was in the grocer's shop Bowzer was basking resplendently on the counter and there seemed to have settled on his countenance the most beatific feline beam I have ever seen. He was fat and sleek and prosperous and completely at his ease. The gay ribbon with which the grocer's pretty daughter had adorned his neck added the final touch indicative of his complete bourgeoisification. But he came and gnawed at my finger in the most friendly fashion, licked my face and purred like a super-charged racing car. I remembered the days when we had

played together on the granary floor and gone to sleep together in the hay: and since he showed no desire to follow me out of the shop I returned home disconsolate. When he died it was probably from fatty degeneration of the heart.

WINTER TALES

Townspeople are apt to imagine that winter nights in the country must be very dull. Certainly there are no theatres or cinemas or brightly lit streets and attractive shop windows. But there is usually too much work to be done in the country for time to drag.

When there weren't visitors—and our fireside was a welcome place for many—there was always the family circle of conversation. My mother was the chief story-teller and she held me enthralled. My father in his quiet, gentle way—using under-statement and the drama of suspense—could also tell a very effective story. But he needed leisure and a ready-made atmosphere. Mother, on the other hand, could create the required atmosphere in her opening sentences.

There were all kinds of tales. Tales of ghosts and spirits and wraiths and of unchancy and by-ordinary doings by night: tales of hardship and suffering in the fields: tales of storms and shipwrecks: tales of great frosts and greater snowstorms in the Borders: tales of characters, pathetic and ludicrous, simple and fantastic, heroic and humorous; in short, tales that crystallised and illumined fifty years of intense and varied life in the Scottish countryside. Indeed, considering the harking back to parents and grandparents, these tales had their roots in the middle of the eighteenth century. Above all, peasant tales, told with that peerless perfection only vouchsafed by the gods to the unlettered genius.

From these tales and stories and reminiscences I learned more of the history of my native land than ever I did from a study of the history books. I obtained an insight into the character of the Scottish peasant and farm labourer that deeply influenced and determined my outlook on the world. And just as I look back on those Tulliallan days as the natural environment from which I was uprooted, so do I look upon the countryman—and this after twenty years of city life—as one with whom I have the closest bonds and affinities. And I can still take my place at a farm labourer's table with complete acceptance. Then twenty years of city life are forgotten in a moment; and the tongue sloughs its Anglicised Scots.

The modern tendency especially among clever and intellectual writers of fearing, above all other things, to be natural (which they confuse with sentimentality and triteness) has tended to corrupt many fine individuals and has obscured many truths. Behind the glitter and spectacle, behind the pomp and circumstance of that floodlit stage where the puppets of fame play out their little parts, the wings are cold and bare and uncharitable—and the puppets the most fushionless of creatures when their act is over and their make-up discarded. But ordinary folks have no need to be other than themselves. Their greatnesses and littlenesses are fundamental and essential. As far as Scotland is concerned, the truth lies somewhere between George Douglas Brown and Robert Burns. Here and there a politician and man of letters remains a man for a' that. But a ploughman and an engineer is, as a man, generally worth any ten of them. There is certainly more honest-to-goodness decency and worth in the cot-house and kitchen than in all the drawing-rooms and salons of Western Europe.

ROBERT BURNS AND AULD NICK

It is true that the farm labourer is seldom in a position to discuss the Ninth Symphony; but his silence is more precious than the ignorant yapping of concert-goers. And he can often discuss the realities of political economy with a grasp never displayed by the front bench of the parliamentary Labour Party. It is also true that, here and there, brutalised by his existence, he becomes brutal himself, beats his wife and allows his children to become verminous. The glory is that not one in a thousand becomes so brutalised. His patron saint was and remains Robert Burns—the Rabbie o' his mither's tongue. And the fact that *The Cottar's Saturday Night* is probably Rabbie's least successful poem makes no difference.

There was always a blazing fire on winter nights at Tulliallan. My mother hated a poor fire in a house: she liked a fire well stoked and blazing merrily—especially when the rain was spitting and hissing in the vent.

I liked to go to bed on winter nights and listen to the rain in the darkness and the wind moaning in the tree tops and maybe in the distance the sweet melancholy throb and pulse of Willie MacKay's pipes.

On still rainless nights, when the darkness was soft and tangible like a rich velvet, an owl would often hoot with such a startling suddenness and clarity that it might have been roosting on the bed-post. And sometimes there were many owls hooting and shrieking like a feathered chorus from hell itself, making the very air vibrant with menace and evil. For though I knew that the owl was the most harmless and gentle of birds, its calling in the night sounded eerie and unearthly and called up visions of ghosts, warlocks, witches and devils.

Auld Clootie was a very real being to us. And though it was part of our national tradition to be on the most pawky familiar terms with him (the De'il himsel' was our most formal manner of address), nevertheless when we found ourselves alone and in the darkness we were inclined to treat him with a certain uneasy circumspection.

Nor do I think we ever really identified Auld Nick with the Satan of the Bible. It was outwith all religious decorum to imagine Satan fiddling through the town and dancing away with the exciseman.

And yet this familiarity with the Evil One must have been fairly modern—either that or the revival of an old custom. For some of the darkest and most horrible pages in our bloody history are defiled with the record of the Church's persecution of Scots women who were found guilty of carnal relations with the Devil. In those evil days the Scottish men of God excelled in the most hideous tortures and abominations (they were almost wholly in the nature of sexual perversion) that only Nazi concentration camps makes them appear historically comparable.

But on those Tulliallan nights when the owls were in session I thought only of the more human evils that Robert Burns had helped more than any one else to rob of their bloodier terrors.

Satan was too evil and too abstract to have any form or personality. Auld Clootie, in addition to playing the pipes and snapping a 'merry gan' strathspey from the fiddle (to say nothing of his cloven-hoofed agility at a reel), spoke with a pronounced Lowland Scottish accent.

TOSSING TREES

There are many winter nights that remain in the memory. Early winter nights. Coming home across the parklands. The sky dark and lowering with masses of heavy black clouds scudding before the rising gale. Bleak nights of rain and storm, about four o'clock of a December evening. The last elements of day still grey in the sullen sky. And against the greyness of the dying day the trees tossing in the wind.

No birds. No sign of wild life. No cattle grazing in the parks: no workers labouring in the fields.

There was great loneliness and desolation in those nights. A feeling that man was alone and deserted—even of God. A mood of deep cosmic pessimism that no gods could dispel. A sensation that at the core of life was emptiness and unutterable loneliness.

And yet there was quiet exaltation in the mood. The trees tossed and strained and groaned and the clouds swept on into the east. The earth plunged into the void of darkness. But man endured. The wild creatures that clung to the earth in terror endured.

This exaltation, born of loneliness and the grey fury of the elements, was no single experience. It came over me again and again at such times. I did not think of the warm fireside that awaited me nor even of the warmth and laughter of my mother. At such moments I was almost alone in the world. For that grey monument had stood through many winter nights on the Abbey Craig. Wallace had endured: his memory endured. I was a boy. Not the philosopher or the saint or the poet or the mystic endured for me. But William Wallace endured. He was my hero. And even as a boy I sensed somehow that his loneliness was lonelier than the heart of the blackest night and his courage, stronger than the strongest tree.

But it was only at such moments, trudging home across the parklands when the trees tossed and the menace of darkness enveloped the earth, that I had any glimmering of this. And often as not the burden of half-apprehended knowledge was too great to be endured and I ran towards the light and warmth of the kitchen.

These nights must have made a very deep impression on my mind and spirit. Ever afterwards in climacteric moments of mental, emotional and spiritual experience I saw the tossing tree-tops against the dark sky. At the heart of the Mass in D they tossed and strained. . . At the far end of the Valley of the Shadow the waving plumes of black branches defied death even on the borders of death.

Those tossing tree limbs straining against the storm of blackness taught me this. That man can never conquer nature, however much he may come to understand the laws governing nature's harmony; for man is but part of 'great nature's plan'; and he can never conquer that of which he is but a part.

VII
SUMMER EVENINGS

PIGS AND BULLOCKS

SUMMER EVENINGS remain a perfect memory—despite midges. Summer evenings and immemorial gloamings; white moths and blundering bats; bare feet and the grass wet with dew.

In early summer the evenings pulsed and quivered with bird-song, dominated by the thrush and the blackbird. As the summer wore on the choir grew less. But there was usually a lonely chorister to fill the gap till the robin came along in the autumn. But while the bird-song thinned and all but died away, the evening sky flashed with twittering swallows.

When bird-nesting (carried on into the heart of June) was finally over, we turned to a variety of other ploys. There was always the standby of rat killing in the pig-styes flanking the dung midden.

A dung midden is not perhaps the most pleasant or hygienic place to get around on bare feet. But we never thought it so and dung and straw were much kinder to the feet than gravel.

Jock and I would approach the midden with great stealth.

Then, armed with our stout sticks, we would leap the wall and dash for the styes. We nearly always got a rat or two lurking about the feeding troughs before they had time to escape. The pigs would grunt and squeal but only the younger ones would display any real curiosity or fear. Without question the pig is the most nonchalant and imperturbable of animals. When they are hungry they can show a very lively concern about food; and when they are being stuck by the butcher’s knife (a barbarity not yet wholly abandoned), their screaming is so diabolically terror-stricken as to be almost unbearable even from a distance. But when satiated with food and filled with contentment, nothing short of an earthquake would disturb them.

A cornered rat can be one of the ugliest brutes of creation. Loathsome at best, they come out in their true colours when facing death. I never liked to corner them for I had a fear of my unprotected feet and legs and I always associated rat-bites with gangrene and blood-poisoning. But once a rat was cornered we took good care to see that our first blows were well aimed.

Their persistency and boldness sometimes annoyed us. If we left the styes for half an hour we could be sure to find a full complement of them scurrying around the troughs on our return.

Sometimes we would go into the parks and have fun with the stirks. We got a couple of poles and stretched them across our shoulders, then we would drape ourselves in a sheet of corn-sacking and charge out from the wood like a crude pantomime horse. Our appearance never failed to attract the stirks. If they were at the other end of the park they would come charging to investigate. About a yard away they would stop and sniff suspiciously. We could see through the wide mesh of the sacking and we would move about cautiously until we were completely surrounded. Then we would throw off the disguise and with our yew bows would shoot a few arrows at them before they took fright and bolted. Few animals can have less brains than a bullock: perhaps castration has some effect on their intelligence. We played this trick on them so often that we grew tired of it. But far from satisfying their curiosity, our last appearance might have been our first.

CAMPING OUT

One summer, when Jock and I were at the crisis of our Boy Scout fever and had formed

ourselves into a troop of owls, we managed after a bit of wheedling and coaxing to get permission to camp for the night.

We had erected a tent of corn-sacking of the kind you could "spit peas through" on a patch of bare grass beneath a young oak tree in the Gardeners' Wood. With no ground-sheet and a piece of carpet for a blanket, we set off on the high adventure.

Our parents, we learned later, expected us back long before midnight. But we were made of sterner stuff. We lit a fire in a rudely built fireplace of flat stones, not only because it seemed the proper thing to do but also to cheer us in the gathering darkness and to save ourselves from being eaten alive with midges. We were not bold enough to engage in any camp-fire singing. Besides it was Saturday night and we might well commit the unforgivable sin of singing into the Sabbath.

We sat at the door of our tent—there wasn't enough sacking to close it—and conducted our conversation in properly subdued tones.

Suddenly the night was shattered by a terrific explosion. A missile whizzed between our heads; and by the time we had drawn our next breath we were a good hundred yards away into the wood.

We soon realised what had happened. One of the flat stones had burst with the heat. We returned rather sheepishly and put out the fire.

Darkness was now creeping silently in on us and, without the cheer and heat of the fire, we began to feel the night very cold. So we retired to the tent and, lying down, pulled the strip of carpet over us. It was about the most damnable thing we could have substituted for a blanket. There wasn't enough of it and what there was was too stiff to conform to the contours of our bodies. Soon the ground became cold and unbelievably hard. We tossed about, we sat up and lay down again. To have confessed we were not enjoying ourselves would have been to admit ourselves tenderfoots, and we considered ourselves patrol leaders and most experienced and hardened ones at that.

Then we lay on our backs and pretended to each other we were sleeping soundly. Fear held us immobile for quite a while and added to the verisimilitude of the deception.

The night became full of strange and menacing noises—the leaves whispered and rustled and the undergrowth stirred uneasily. We might have gone home had the way home not led through the wood. Frightened and uncomfortable though we were, we reckoned we were safer in our flimsy tent. Fortunately the night was short. With the breaking of dawn and the passing of the shadows we felt more reassured. Relieved, we dozed fitfully. But as soon as the sunlight began to flood into the wood, we got up and went home, feeling dog-tired and utterly wretched in ourselves.

Jock went to his bed—his parents weren't up. But I arrived in time for breakfast after the milking and going to bed was out of the question. Besides, I would not admit that the experience had been a dismal failure.

Retribution came at church in the afternoon, which I always attended alone. The Reverend John had a fine rich voice, soothing and soporific. In the early part of the sermon I caught myself nodding and pulled myself up with a jerk. But sleep beat me. The next thing I knew was that my forehead hit the book-rest with a resounding smack. The sound was so loud that I felt it must have resounded throughout the church. I immediately looked to the pulpit to find the minister's brows lowered in mild reproach.

I had disgraced myself. Several people had noted the lapse and they duly reported my heinousness. But my mother understood the reason and chaffed me good-humouredly.

JOINT WORSHIP

My second lapse, however, was not treated so leniently. Jock was of the U.F. persuasion, but Davie and I were Auld Kirk. Often we accompanied each other on a Sunday afternoon over the Kirk Brae. Our ways parted in the vestibule of the Kirk: Davie ascending the left flight of stone stairs to the gallery and myself the right. One Sunday, however, it was suggested that it was silly for us to occupy our respective empty pews and that there could be no pious objection to our combining forces for the purpose of worship. Davie at this time was less impressed by the sanctity of God's House than I was. During the long prayer he produced a bent hairpin and a piece of elastic. This made a tiny but effective catapult and, with a pocketful of seed corn, he began to aim at the bald head of the Reverend John, bowed in prayer. We never for a moment thought that any one would be so impious as ourselves and that all eyes would be reverently closed. Quietly and surreptitiously we enjoyed the sport and the catapult changed hands frequently. But the sling was too fragile and the seed corn too light: the grain did little more than reach the edge of the gallery. Presumably it rained on the heads of those below. We did not realise that adults were in the habit of praying with open eyes carefully shielded by open fingers. By the time we had got out of Sunday School an hour later, word had been conveyed to our parents of our scandalous conduct and we were very severely reprimanded. Despite much coaxing from Davie, I never joined forces in afternoon worship with him again.

PINK FEET

Whatever our sport on a summer's night, we invariably rounded it off with a run through one or other of the grass parks. Jock and I always enjoyed this run in the gloaming for itself: but its origin was severely practical. Neither of us had any desire, once we got in for the night, to engage in unnecessary ablutions. The run through the dew-wet grass cleansed our feet better than any washing could have done. We would disturb moths in the long grass, send rabbits scurrying into the wood and sometimes raise a hare. When we knew we could stay out no longer we tiptoed home—picking our steps very carefully in order to be able to present a clean pair of heels and so avoid the tub.

A REVEREND ANTHOLOGIST

About the age of ten I got a book from Professor Christie (or his brother): *Summer Time in the Country*, by the Reverend Robert Aris Willmott, which appeared to have been written around 1858 (although my copy bore the imprint of Routledge in 1880). The illustrations of Birket Foster, Harrison Weir and John M. Carrick (engraved by the Brothers Dalziel), I browsed over for the next few years. The text, in the form of a journal, contained more quotations than original matter. The Reverend Willmott was really a quotation anthologist of the poets and poetasters of the countryside. Many of the poems I found pleasurable and interesting and they formed my introduction to English poetry. The text I found uniformly dull. But, scanning the volume many years later, I find that the reverend gentleman could, on occasion, use an oblique nib in his pen. His description of Walpole gives an idea of his flavour:

"He was a well-dressed scoffer of refined manners; a kind of English Voltaire, abridged and lettered, with gilt leaves, and elegantly tooled."

It occurred to me then (as it has been proved to me since) that the nineteenth-century clergyman lived through his days in a drowsy balm of the most indolent and charming parasitism. The Reverend Mr. Atkinson collected eggs and observed the habits of newts: Robert Aris Willmott walks in the pleasant countryside, going home to afternoon tea to search the poets for a suitable quotation:

"May 1st. It is delicious to creep through the green trees and along the scented hedges,

Where blows the woodbine faintly streaked with red

until you steal on the leafy haunt of the woodlark. Good Mrs. Barbauld expresses my wish in her pretty *Ode to Spring*:

Now let me sit beneath the whitening thorn,
And mark thy spreading tints steal o'er the dale;
And watch with patient eye
They fair unfolding charms.

Good Mrs. Barbauld and her pretty odes to the spring! Beneath the burgeoning earth little children were being worked to death that the good and godly Mr. Willmott might have the kettle boiled for his afternoon cup of tea. And no doubt this was why I found his text so uniformly dull."

GLOAMING OF THE GODS

The gloamings always affected me deeply and, in the woods and parklands, the gloamings were filled with a deep poetry and tended to create the gentle ache of mysticism.

At first the light dimmed and faded. Shadows crept out from the woods and along the hollows of the fields. Bats began their blundering flight and large moths fluttered among the tall grasses. In the woods the shadows grouped and merged and stole imperceptibly from bush to bush, drawing closer in a gently narrowing circle.

Sometimes a light scarf of mist lay about the hollows if the nights were damp and the grass heavy with dew—especially towards autumn. But the real magic of the gloamings came on the heels of midsummer after a long day of perfect sunshine. Then the harsh lights faded and every contour softened and dimmed and the Ochils crouched down in sleep. The trees flowed together in a protean mirk and the muted bellow of a bull floated across the rich meadows; and the world, turning softly on its axis, spun its twilight web. On such nights did the ancient poet dream how God walked in the garden with Adam.

The apprehension of the gloaming was the Wordsworthian trailing clouds of glory variety. My experience was in its infancy: and here in truth was the heaven that lay around me. I had practically no knowledge of time's mortality—a knowledge which, when it is first apprehended in youth, is the saddest knowledge the mind of man may know: just as later it can become his greatest solace.

I was to know something of that awful mortality before I left Tulliallan. When, as I combed my mother's hair and found little by little white hairs fighting a winning battle with the brown. It was then I realised that all things ripened towards the grave.

And perhaps deep in my sub-conscious I felt something of this in the summer gloaming—running contrapuntally with the timeless sense that is the essence of eternity.

THE DUSK OF OTHER DAYS

I can recall many perfect summer evenings. A weary dusk settling down across the rolling acres of Wiltshire and stealing with an ancient melancholy along the bare ridges of the Dorset downs or climbing up out of the plain beneath the rampart of a shrouded Shrewsbury; or melting the hard Cornish coastline and shimmering in Polpero Bay. Summer evenings in Skye with the majesty of the Coolins awesome before the riotous back-cloth of sunset—and the Skye sunsets—indeed the whole range of Hebridean sunsets—are among the greatest of Nature’s glories. And greater than all these, the summer evenings of West Sutherland, the unearthly drunken fairyland of Suilven, Canisp, Ben More Assynt, Stac Polly and Achiltibuie, Achmelvich, Clachnessie, Drumbeg, Ned. Nights when all things merge and flow in the gloaming of the end of time and the magic mountains move in the dusk like the ghosts of Ossianic giants and the imagination staggers and reels faint and swooning amidst the unsubstantial reality of that which never was on land or sea: the poetical nightmare of fantasy that eludes all comprehension, refuses the snare of words and defies the encirclement of thought; where all thought evaporates and a succession of spiritual orgasms exhausts the soul till it sinks into the bottomless abyss of delirium and the phallus of Suilven alone endures and the light of all time’s eons shimmers across Achmelvich Bay. . .

But against all the intoxicating insanity of the West Sutherland night (which would ultimately reduce the spirit to gibbering imbecility) I would place the summer’s gloaming of Tulliallan. Its magic fed the imagination and strengthened the spirit. If it tended towards mysticism it stopped short of delirium. Reality softened and dimmed but never evaporated. The will did not melt but was strengthened and fortified. However great the magic, the Tulliallan gloamings remained basically warm and human: essentially they were of the nature of fulfilment and merged imperceptibly towards sleep.

Stripped bare, they were the gloamings of homeland, the summer evenings of a rich and friendly soil, the gentle veiling of what was known and loved—familiar.

But why should the memory of those natal summer evenings be stripped bare when Nature clothed them so warmly?

VIII
SEASON OF MISTS

PLAIN AND PIEBALD

AUTUMN was full of a slow melancholy sadness. The nights began to creep in; the leaves dulled and withered and sank in a fantasy of red and yellow and russet brown. Smoke drifted lazily from the house-tops for the air was heavy and damp with decay. The glory of summer was departed but the rigours of winter seemed far away. The twittering swallows that had gathered in the sky and strung themselves on the telephone wires had gone in the night. In the mornings and towards dusk the lonely delicate pipe of the robin came from the garden hedge. The chicks of the spring days began to give evidence of their sex and gawky cockerels attempted to crow and cheek the faded rooster grown weary of the long summer days. Potato shaws withered in the drills; and only an odd bloom lingered on the rose. The sadness of decay was mellowed with the satisfaction of ripeness. Only the lonely bee searched vainly for sustenance—or sought to store the last cell of the comb.

As the leaves of the horse chestnuts flamed yellow and crimson, the chestnuts became ripe in their prickly casings. We would search for them where they fell among the first leaves; but more often we would try to dislodge our imagined favourite where it still hung from the baring branches.

We liked them piebald for their beauty; but the piebald ones were seldom hard enough for engaging in the game of ‘bully.’ The selected bully was threaded on a piece of string and held up to be smacked by an opponent. The smacks went on alternately until one or other chestnut was broken from the string. The victor then became ‘bully of one.’ A real bully might become the bully of a round dozen before he finally succumbed to the rigours of the campaign. Some strategists would seek to gain victory by heating their chestnuts in the oven; but this was frowned upon. Heating shrivelled the smooth skin of the chestnut and an ovened bully was never considered to have won his honours fairly.

About this time the walnuts became ripe. We had to be careful in unhusking the nut. The walnut juice stained the fingers worse than any nicotine, and sometimes in trying to break the nut with our teeth we would stain our lips also. The stain did not wash off, and as Mr. Weir had a particular objection to it, we had to resort to devious methods of getting at the kernel.

Hazelnuts, however, presented no such difficulties and the kernel was very much sweeter. Unfortunately there was only one hazel tree within easy access and sometimes we would be forestalled. After restraining ourselves heroically till the nuts were really ripe we might arrive to find the tree almost stripped.

HARVEST HOME

Autumn was officially celebrated by the leading-in of the harvest. It was always an adventure to accompany the carts and ride back to the steading on the top of the swaying load.

This was about the only time we regretted having our bare feet. It was very painful to walk over the new stubble. But the pain was well worth bearing if we were rewarded with a lift back to the steading. Sometimes a few stacks would be built at Blackhall—if the harvest was being led from a convenient field. But the bulk of the harvest went to Windyhill. This was sore work on the horses. Situated on the brow of a hill, it could only be approached by a very stiff climb, whether from the west or the east.

After the leading-in the thorn hedges were draggled and untidy with wisps of straw

brushed from the carts. This untidiness had a melancholy aspect. It was the final indication that summer was over and that it did not really matter what happened now.

APPLES BE RIPE

The only person with a private orchard in Tulliallan was the head gardener. His orchard was separated from the byre yard by a wire fence; and from the cover of the byre Jock and I used to raid it, making our getaway, should we be interrupted, through a door in the high wall that led to the Gardeners' Wood.

Our greatest rivals were the hens, which the gardener kept in the orchard. He was not over-generous in feeding them—or perhaps they were greedy, as is their habit. Before we made our raids, Jock and I would observe the orchard for a while to make sure that all was safe. Sometimes as we watched a ripe apple would fall to the ground—especially if a strong wind were blowing. But the apple no sooner hit the ground than it was caught on the rebound by the hens who literally flew from all quarters of the orchard to get their nebs into it.

In our raids we used pieces of stick which we threw at the most tempting-looking apples in an effort to dislodge them. But when we succeeded we had to move quickly to gain possession of the apple before the hens who anticipated our movements and stood around in readiness.

The gardener's hens were the subject of much speculation and gossip around Blackhall. They were the only hens fed with a whip; and we often watched the spectacle with much amusement. The gardener's daughter would appear with a bowl of Indian corn and a whip. The hens were fed a grain at a time; and when a fowl had got its grain it also got a crack with the whip to remind it of the limit of its portion. The system was not foul proof. But in a rough way it did ensure a balanced if frugal diet.

One summer the gardener decided to keep bees. He had some wooden skeps made and placed in the orchard. In due course he bought the bees and in a few weeks everything seemed to be going well. But the hens began to take an interest in their neighbours. For a time they watched them with craned necks and cocked heads as the bees landed on the entrance board and crawled into the hive.

Suddenly there was a speculative dab and the first bee went west. There was a moment's interested pause to see what the results might be. The courageous sampler stretched her neck and chirawaked a little, hoping no doubt that her boldness would be without evil repercussion. As no untoward symptoms arose the prospect of a cropful of bees seemed preferable to a cropful of east wind. Soon there was a sharp tattoo of voracious nebs on the wooden ledges of the skeps—and that was the end of the bees.

The gardener's last economic venture was to keep a couple of pigs. He erected a sty at the farthest end of the orchard against the wall and bought a couple of young pigs for fattening. At least that seems to have been the idea. But the pigs did not thrive very well on a diet of tea-leaves and potato peelings. They made a great deal of noise about it.

As the months wore on the pigs grew thin and gaunt, developing rather gruesome humps on their backs. The noises they now emitted also altered in character and rather alarmingly suggested the jackal or the laughing hyena.

Alarmed at the turn of events, the gardener consulted my mother. He asked if she would care to have a look at them and express an opinion. She accompanied him to the sty and gazed at the exhibits in a silence not unmingled with awe.

“Do you think they’ll come out all right?” he asked, somewhat apprehensively.

“Oh, no doubt they’ll come out all right—as long as they dinna come out o’ the sty and set about worrying somebody! I’ve nae doubt they were pigs at one time, but I’m a wee feared they’re shaping for dromaderies now. . .”

THE PEAR TREE

It was Geordie Fyfe who showed us how to make a proper raid. There was a tall pear tree in the middle of the orchard and small sweet pears clustered on its topmost boughs. It was very difficult for us to dislodge them with small pieces of stick. Geordie was mixing lime behind the wall of the byre yard. He saw us and called us over. He asked if the pears were good—we assured him they were delicious.

“Then we’ll damned soon see about getting some!” he said, and gazed around for a stick.

There wasn’t one handy or of a suitable weight. So Geordie, who was never stuck, swung the lime barrow over his head and smashed it on the wall, announcing casually that Sir James could well afford to pay for another.

Finally we set off for the orchard with Geordie armed with the shaft (or tram) of the barrow. Geordie set about the job properly. He wanted the pears—but he didn’t want to be caught.

“Now, I’ll throw up the tram. You be ready to gather up the pears and I’ll run down and throw up some lime just to let them see I’m working.”

Geordie cast the shaft into the topmost branches, down came a shower of pears, leaves and small twigs.

We were afraid the gardener’s wife would hear the thud with which the shaft hit the ground for her kitchen windows looked out on to the orchard. After each throw Geordie would rush down to the lime behind the wall and throw some shovelfuls into the air while we gathered up the pears and dashed quickly into the wood. We allowed a few minutes for peace to settle, reconnoitred carefully and then made another sally.

It was a satisfactory afternoon—we bagged nearly a hundredweight of pears, almost clearing the tree and, I’m afraid, doing it considerable damage.

Of course we couldn’t take home any pears—for they would have been evidence of our guilt. We ate what we could, hid a few for the next day, and Geordie had the rest.

Geordie tightened his belt, stuffed them down the neck of his shirt, filled his voluminous pockets, mounted his bicycle and rode merrily away. His parting advice was characteristic:

“If ony o’ you young de’ils breathe a word o’ this, I’ll slit your bloody throats.”

The next morning, before the gardener had time to make a complaint regarding the raiding of his pear tree, Geordie had presented himself at the factor’s office with the complaint that the lime barrow had been broken during the night.

KICKING LEAVES

The approach of winter was borne in on us when going to school over the Kirk Brae we shuffled through the brown drifts of fallen leaves—especially the crisp brown leaves of the beeches. Nowadays the zest with which street scavenging is pursued deprives school children of this pleasure. Then no one bothered much about the leaves on the Kirk Brae. But it was a

different matter on the Tulliallan drives—especially when Sievewright was in residence. These were swept regularly with long birch brooms. But if there were no leaves to be kicked on the drives, the drifts lay deep in the woods and along the lea of the dykes.

The leaves of the lime were shed first: the oak and the ash were the last to release their grip. The oak leaves, indeed, might cling tenaciously till the beginning of December. Winter was never considered to have set in properly till the last leaves had gone and the branches stood bare and gaunt against the grey skies and storms of rooks gyrated between them and the night.

But throughout every manifestation, every subtlety and nuance, was the note of sadness and the soft chord of melancholy. Autumn was somehow indeterminate—a wistful overlong lingering amid the scenes of a drifting and decaying glory. Even the autumn equinox that made the woods a sea of heaving and tossing branches and sent the brown and yellow spume of leaves flying far across the parklands, lacked a decisive dramatic quality. Even in the grasp of the last gale autumn still stood forlorn ragged and infinitely wistful. Leaves still fluttered to the ground and crimson hips and flaming haws bedizened the bare hedgerows; lapwings still tossed above the fields and the crying of the curlew still faded across the fading purple of the moor.

There was voluptuousness in the softness of the autumn; but it was a grey voluptuousness; and the pulse was the beat of raindrops from wet boughs; there was nothing of the deep, almost cloying drowsiness of Keats.

There are, no doubt, country joys of a bucolic nature. But I must confess I have no experience of them. Work on the land and attention to the beasts of the field does not make for the spree and the splore or orgies of alcohol and sex: these are the pastimes of parasitical civilisation. The idea of highly oversexed buxom dairy-maids and lustful loutish swains is the product of city-fired imagination. Drunkenness does exist in the country—but only in mild bouts and in the odd individual. And country love-making is more natural—because it is more direct and lacking in sophistication. Hence there is more natural and spontaneous gaiety.

But almost everything in the country turns on Nature—the weather, the condition of the soil and the slow wheel of the seasons. So in autumn with the coming of ever earlier darkness there is a turn to the fireside and an intensification of indoor industry.

But the fireside properly belongs to winter. There was always a driech spell when the division twixt the day and night lacked a definite demarcation—when work about the garden was unprofitable and the daylight lingered long enough to make lamplight wasteful.

And so here in the practical sense of domestic economy autumn with its slow melancholy of drooping fields and withered hedgerows became a weariness and a bug-bear and folks sustained themselves as best they might against the coming of winter frosts and early darkness. For autumn had many unpleasant characteristics—mud and glaur and dirty puddles on every road.

IX
THE CIRCUS

COLOURED WAGONS

EVERY YEAR—usually after the leading-in of the harvest—Pindar Ord's circus came to the village green. From the point of view of entertainment it was probably the high light of the year.

Memories of it are telescoped. At first my father took me to visit the circus. Later I visited it with Jock; or went myself.

The day before the circus was due to open we might see the cavalcade proceeding along the Alloa or the Dunfermline road. This was a grand sight in itself. The brightly painted wagons—reds and yellows seemed to be the favourite colours—drawn by piebald ponies. And the elephants: we never failed to thrill to them. This was the Edwardian era of the circus—nowadays the sadly depleted remains of the old circus are almost entirely mechanised.

THE SAWDUST RING

The circus entertainment was on traditional lines. A circus master in tails, top hat, cracking a long whip. A clown and his foil. Equestrians, jugglers, tight-rope walkers, trapeze artists, Indian knife-throwers and the never-failing performance of the elephants—a performance that always seemed to me to be vastly ridiculous. Why I don't exactly know; but the sight of those great docile beasts sitting on tubs and begging or limping around on two legs was certainly grotesque and ungainly.

There was a tale told about one of the carse farmers who visited the circus and was greatly attracted by the activities of an Indian knife-thrower. A girl—of uncertain age—posed in front of a board. She held herself very stiff and erect while the knife-thrower did a lot of imposing business with the knives and the ring-master worked up quite a patter about the danger of the act and the skill of the thrower. Jock MacGregor, the farmer, who was quite deaf and slightly drunk, heard nothing of this. He watched the knife-thrower intently. Then the arm described an arc in the air and the flashing blade sank quivering into the board not half an inch from the girl's nose.

Jock turned disgustedly to his companion.

"Christ, he's missed her!"

This story may be apocryphal, but it was certainly in keeping with Jock's character and reputation.

THE KING OF THE JUNGLE

There were other attractions to which my father took me: Biddle's Ghost and the Menagerie. The Ghost business was very realistic, though my father told me afterwards it was effected by the use of mirrors.

I enjoyed the menagerie. Here we witnessed a performance that remains vividly in my mind. A lion-tamer, resplendent in blue serge and gold braid, entered the cage of a "ferocious, untamed, man-eating lion." The lion had certainly appeared to justify these superlatives. It was a massive creature and appeared to be in excellent condition as well as being in what might be described as permanent fighting trim. It padded up and down its narrow cage, frequently

emitting growls, roars or bellows greatly in excess of the efforts of the Goldwyn specimen. Sometimes it plunged at the bars and rocked its cage so that the crowd retreated fearing that it might escape.

Just before the performance an attendant came along and slipped in a tin dish which seemed to contain about half a pint of discoloured milk. This my omniscient parent informed me —and his general knowledge was indeed remarkable—was a dope to quieten and soothe the savage beast. It may well have been some such drug or soporific; but if so the lion showed remarkable powers of resistance. When the lion-tamer appeared, it lashed itself into a really frightening fury. I was reminded of the Gilbert lines:

> *There is beauty in the bellow of the blast,*
> *There is grandeur in the growling of the gale,*
> *There is eloquent outpouring when the lion is a-roaring*
> *And the tiger is a-lashing of his tail.*

The master of ceremonies made an impressive speech. He pointed to the ferocious animal, called King Something-or-Other, and defied any one to produce a lion half so ferocious. He drew our attention to the roof and walls of the cage, liberally spattered with blood, vivid witness to the death of a former lion-tamer but a week or so previously. I shuddered at this and was speedily disillusioned, or comforted, by the assurance that the blood marks came from the chunks of raw meat with which the animal was fed.

Having worked on our feelings in masterly fashion, we had the mystery of the safety cage explained to us. The lion-tamer would enter this safety cage and lock himself in so that, should the lion get him, the public could be perfectly reassured that it would not get them. From the safety cage the lion-tamer would enter the presence of the many-superlatived King of the Jungle. Finally, in order that the lion might not be unduly enraged or the lion-tamer unduly distracted, we were solemnly enjoined to refrain from yelling, screaming, shouting advice or encouragement or making our presence known in any way.

The harangue ended, a couple of attendants appeared with long red-hot bars and succeeded in driving the lion into the corner farthest from the door. Here they held him while the lion-tamer entered the safety cage and locked himself in. There was a silence in which the proverbial pin might have been dropped with the noise of a tossed caber. The automatic catch of the cage was released: the tamer stepped into the den. He stood tense in the middle of the end wall facing the lion. He signalled with his hand. The attendants withdrew the bars. The lion sprang. The tamer stepped deftly aside. The lion crashed against the wall where he had stood. They now occupied reverse positions. Again the lion sprang. The tamer side-stepped, the lion crashed. The tamer—and his footwork was perfect—stood with his back to the wall in his first position with the safety cage on his left. The lion wasted not a moment: he sprang again. Again the tamer dodged, side-stepped, wheeled about. He was now at the other end from the safety cage. His next movement would have to be perfectly judged and synchronised. His back was to the wall: he leaned well to his right. The lion was deceived: thinking he would get the tamer in the corner he sprang with a loud growl. The tamer righted himself as the beast sprang, used the middle of the back wall as a lever, and flung himself at the safety door. It clicked on his heels as the claws of the animal ripped at the epaulet on his shoulder. He stood in the safety cage and wiped the sweat from his forehead. There could be no doubt that this was a most impressive act. So moved was the audience that no one applauded.

In another cage a very attractive, if foreign-looking girl played familiarly with a very docile

and bored-looking lion. Finally she opened the lion's jaws with her hands and inserted her very pretty little head into what the master of ceremonies picturesquely described as the "jaws of death."

He spoke more truly than we knew. A week later we read in the newspapers how the lion had closed its jaws at the critical moment with fatal results. Jock MacGregor said it was a damned pity it hadn't taken place at Kincardine for he'd have liked fine to have seen it. While not endorsing this—for the girl had seemed very young and very attractive with her sleek black hair and flashing black eyes—I felt that my instinct that lions are not suited for petting was correct.

Years later at the Corstorphine Zoo I stood beside an agricultural labourer in his Sunday best and bowler hat. He was gazing intently at some lions in a cage. The lions looked bored and listless. One huge brute sat and licked his enormous paw and proceeded to wash his face in the identical manner of the domestic cat. Another yawned wearily and stretched her legs. A more docile and friendly lot of brutes you couldn't hope to meet on a Sunday evening walk. He must have been leaning on the bar for some time. Finally he straightened himself with some effort and the distant speculative look faded from his eyes. He turned to me as one who had come to a momentous conclusion:

"Ah, damn't: they're no' sae tame gin they were out amang the fowk."

BENEATH THE STARS

Coming out of the menagerie into the flare-spattered darkness, all was riot and bedizened merriment. The steam organ at the centre of the hobby-horses blared:

Down in Arizona where the wild men are
With nothing else to guide you but an evening star . . .

The gilded nags charged bravely on the periphery of the brazon melody, breasting their hurdles with the grace of amphibians.

Brave callants swung their sweethearts to sickening heights in the gondolas, to the accompaniment of hysterical shrieks and roars of encouragement from the spectators. Strong men lashed themselves into a sweating frenzy in a vain endeavour to 'ring the bell' with the wooden mallet. Marksmen, drunk and sober, banged away at coloured celluloid balls bobbing on water jets. Others smashed down Aunt Sallies with wooden balls for a cocoanut or a brightly coloured monkey, ingeniously made with wool and twisted wire.

My mother was passionately fond of a cocoanut—even to-day I find a chunk the only certain and unfailing remedy for indigestion—so my father had to enlist the aid of some of the young bloods to secure him one to take home, for he was either too shy or too uncertain of his aim to joist at the booths on his own behalf.

Jostling in the milling crowd between the line of booths I realised, if dimly, what it meant to have eligible sisters. Young men, whom I hardly knew, would present me with some gee-gaw, usually a coloured monkey, with the injunction to tell—whichever sister attracted them—who the generous donor was.

We would leave the fair while the fun was still at its height. The dimly lit streets of the village would be quiet and deserted. I would trudge happily at my father's side. Across the silence and darkness of the night, across the smoke drifting lums would come faint blasts from

the steam organ. But by the time we had reached the Manse Brae and had left the last dim light of the village behind, all sound of merriment had faded.

My father would say softly:

"Weel—did you enjoy yoursel', laddie?"

And I would reply in a monosyllable full of significance.

But the night was not fully rounded off till my mother had broken the cocoanut. If there were several she would shake them till she found one full of milk. I usually got the milk to drink. I imagine it was only the greatest maternal devotion that drove her to sacrifice this pleasure.

AND WHAT DID I SEE?

And I would go to bed in a quiet ecstasy of contentment, my mind filled with pictures of the circus and the showground, against the hot blaring background of the steam organ and the spluttering of the naphtha flares. An evening's entrancement that probably didn't cost more than sixpence: a show in which every actor was "as large as life and twice as handsome."

The cinema can bring the universe before our eyes and it is only as yet in the infancy of its development. But there was a quality of intimateness and stark reality about that circus that no cinema has yet achieved. I very much doubt if to a small boy any representation can surpass the thrill of witnessing a real man in a real lion's cage. Had I been brought up on the cinema my knowledge and experience would doubtless have been larger, but I doubt if my sense of wonder would have been as great. For the imagination feeds on wonder, and action is born of imagination. Before men do, they dream. . .

And yet there are effects the supreme genius of cinema, Pudovkin, can achieve with simple things like a falling chain. . . And Eisenstein, with a reed trembling in the wind, can make me hold my breath in wonder.

X
WAR, 1914-18

THE FIRST SHOCK

THE WAR of 1914-18 marks one of the greatest dividing lines in world history. Here I am only concerned with its effect on my personal history and on Tulliallan. The war destroyed Tulliallan—utterly and finally.

I was paying my second brief visit to Glasgow when war broke out. On the Saturday night my cousin, a bank clerk, took me to see a show at, I believe, the Coliseum—then a variety house. There was an immense crowd there waiting to get in. It was a jostling, excited crowd and I was very much afraid of it since around Tulliallan five people constituted a fair-sized crowd at any time. To prevent me being crushed and squeezed, James lifted me on to his shoulder. He was an upstanding handsome fellow. Someone in the crowd suggested that it was ridiculous that a boy of my age—for I was then only nine years old—should be attending the show at all. Whereupon a kindly if rather bellicose drunk roared, “Awa’ tae hell: the laddie’s here tae enjoy himsel’ wi’ his faither and mither an’ if they’re peying for their seats they’ve as much richt here as onybody.” James and my sister blushed.

Ultimately we secured a good seat in the circle and the show commenced. I was quite bewildered by it. But I remember thinking it unduly vulgar. Gross attitudes indicating the passing of wind to the accompaniment of well synchronised blasts from the brasses of the orchestra seemed, then as now, to bring the house down.

It seemed like the next day newsboys were shouting “War Declared” in the streets. Every one was excited, perturbed and extremely talkative. In the excitement I seemed to have no place. The following day we went back to Tulliallan.

If there was any great excitement at Tulliallan it failed to make any impression on me. But a day or two later I was walking in the forest with William Christie when we heard, very faintly on the breeze, the sound of a band. Immediately Mr. William was trembling with excitement. “Come along, nipper,” he shouted, “we must run.” So off we set at a jog-trot in the direction of Blackhall.

By the time we got there, Territorials were marching into the Cuddy Park and setting up their tents. It was all very thrilling and exciting. Here was the first real evidence of war. My second eldest sister, Mary, who was a dressmaker in Alloa, was one of the most perfervid jingoists I have ever known. She took her patriotism seriously and would have given her life gladly for King and Country. So that night we had several khaki-clad figures in to tea.

But every one seemed curiously light-hearted. The soldiers were certain that the war would be over before they got there. A fortnight, at the outside, would see the end of Kaiser Bill.

But somehow at the end of a fortnight Kaiser Bill was still alive and kicking and things didn’t seem to be going too well for the glorious allies.

The next thing I heard was that my Glasgow cousin James and his brother John had joined the Cameron Highlanders and were off in the direction of Inverness to undergo training.

Then the army authorities commandeered Willie MacKay’s best hunter and there was a great shindy about that. The war was getting serious when they could come along and take Sir James Sievewright’s property without as much as by your leave.

But worse was to follow. Sir James and Lady Sievewright were in Germany where, it was alleged, Sir James was unveiling a memorial to Kruger. The Germans had interned them. They might be there for the duration: they might even be shot. For the Germans were terribly blood-thirsty people and a growing list of their appalling atrocities was being widely disseminated. The Huns was the most polite reference a good patriot could allow himself to make of them.

This Hun-fever was whipped up and fanned in every conceivable way. An alleged German butcher in Alloa had his shop wrecked by a patriotic mob. Now we were getting somewhere.

In the meantime food prices were rising alarmingly and my sister Mary was shouting loudly that an individual by the name of Ramsay MacDonald, pro-German, and Lord alone knows what else, should be put up against the wall and shot. This Ramsay MacDonald seemed to be more dangerous than all the unspeakable hordes of Huns.

It wasn’t long till every young man eligible for military service was subjected to the closest conversational scrutiny. The pros and cons of his unwillingness to join the colours were exhaustively and often acrimoniously debated. White feathers began to be delivered to unregenerate shirkers. Young women became outrageously virtuous in egging on young men to their death and destruction.

The war fever raged unabated until the lists of dead, missing and wounded began to pour in. The distribution of white feathers began to lose a lot of its glamour.

Meantime the diabolical Huns became even more diabolical, and the imagination almost boggled at their latest atrocities.

But gradually soldiers came back on leave from the front and, though none of them seemed to be very communicative, they did indicate that the Huns weren’t so diabolical after all. Indeed they referred to them as Jerries—a name that sounded almost affectionate. The gallant little Belgians didn’t seem to be regarded with any great favour and there were unsympathetic references to ‘the Froggies.’ The Jocks on leave from the Front Line were rather grim sober fellows even when (keep it dark) they went out and got blind drunk. Indeed their expected swaggering, flag-wagging bellicosity was markedly conspicuous by its total absence. Moreover it began to be bruited about that soldiers were not the most sexually moral of men and respectable girls who walked out with them soon began to lose their respectability. A crop of war babies soon provided the confirmatory evidence and scandalous revelations and malicious inventions were on the gossip orders of the day. But perhaps the juiciest scandal was the revelation that women were not faithful to their husbands fighting at the front. It seemed as if the war was making hay of morality.

SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS

But moral conduct in general was being overturned. Sunday newspapers began to appear. They only consisted of a folded sheet of war news. Their issue seemed like a flagrant breach of the Sabbath Day to many open conformers of the Presbyterian faith and an opinion was obtained from the Kirk, which was something to the effect that, in view of the state of grave national emergency, it would not be considered a lapse from grace if the casualty columns were piously scanned. But, of course, once the Sunday newspapers were established they never looked back, and it wasn’t long till they contained spicy reports from the divorce courts and gave the latest news about rape, incest, sodomy, inversion, homo-sexuality, abortion—indeed a veritable Freudian calendar of sex and near sex horrors.

At church, I do not think a Sunday passed but we sang:

Peace, perfect peace,
In this dark world of sin,
The voice of Jesus
Murmurs peace within.

It was wailed forth with the most heart-rending lugubriosity, the choir trailing behind the organ and the congregation behind the choir. Yet it must have meant much more than a holy blues to many a parent with a son or two on active service. And there was scarcely a Sunday but there were some khaki-clad figures scattered about the pews.

I recall one afternoon vividly. I had just come in from a long walk in the woods and I heard my sister Mary crying. She was sitting at her machine sewing grey flannel shirts.

"Have you heard the terrible news?" she cried. "Kitchener's drowned."

Her grief was strange and alarming. Kitchener's death meant less than nothing to me. Indeed I disliked his hard soulless face. But there could be no question about the genuineness of Mary's grief. Kitchener's death meant more to her than the loss of ten thousand Jocks.

Yet she worked herself to the bone sewing seemingly endless piles of grey flannel shirts and the hum of the sewing machine went on far into the night. Considering she was sewing all day, it must have taken great enthusiasm to continue it in her spare hours to say nothing of those borrowed from sleep. She was certainly entitled to an O.B.E. with bars.

In addition to sewing shirts, she was active in the V.A.D. She had wanted to join the W.A.A.C.'s. But her military ambitions were frustrated.

It wasn't long till I was dragged in to assist the local detachment. Mary took me down to one of the schoolrooms where I was laid upon a table and bandaged for nearly every possible wound, fracture or injury. It was embarrassing of course to be surrounded by such a bevy of females: but for the most part I lay with my eyes shut. I fancy, however, that many of them would have been more satisfied with a maturer specimen on which to experiment. For many it must have been a very driech business.

THE PASSING SHOW

And yet the war did not affect me very deeply. Slates were introduced into the school as an economy measure. They gave me the grues—the sound of the scratching pencils brushed my nerves the wrong way. They were extremely unhygienic. The usual method of cleaning was to spit on them and then rub the spittle off with the sleeve.

We also got a long lecture about Boy Cornwall, V.C., and were intimidated into buying a Cornwall Stamp. But we were too young for this to mean much.

It was much more fun to go out on expeditions round the village and collect waste-paper. Whether this activity was of any value I have no means of knowing. We certainly collected enormous quantities of it. But so little interested were we in this aspect of the collecting that we never bothered to find out where it went.

In addition to newspaper collecting, there was an expedition sent into the Tulliallan woods to collect fir cones for seed. I was appointed chief inspector, being the only one who knew whether or not a cone had shed its seed. The result of this expedition was almost farcical, for the scholars treated the whole business as a joke and filled their baskets with anything that bore a resemblance to a cone. I got so fed up with the silly futility of it that I wandered off into the depths of the forest with Willie Russell—much to Mrs. Paterson's disappointment and annoyance.

But of course the war let loose the most pious patriotic cranks and busybodies who rushed around inventing and inaugurating schemes of national importance and who would have done much more good to their country if they had sat at their own firesides and expressed their

patriotism in singing *Rule Britannia*—or the respective national anthems of the glorious allies which were very popular at this time.

The only collections I ever engaged in that were of any use were for sphagnum moss, which my sister saw was forwarded to the right source. She assured me that the moss was really used in forms for dressings and I collected it with avidity.

Although the war brought misery and desolation to the village, it had, as the dark cloud had, its silver lining of wit and humour—and patient heroism. There were many war-time tales about the village. Few of them can be told here without causing hurt or offence to many decent folks. But the tale of Andra Peddie will bear repetition for it was Andra himself who told it. Andra was a rather gaunt hunchback and he had extraordinary splayed feet. When Andra got his calling-up papers most folks thought it was about time we were showing signs of winning the war if we were ever to win it. Andra was rather dumped himself for he had no desire to don uniform and shoulder a rifle. But he returned from the medical inspection triumphant.

"I'm rejected!" he cried: "I'm rejected!"

"Hoo that?" asked a wag.

"The sergeant telt me it was sodjers for France they wantit: no' camels for Egypt."

And Andra bared his yellow teeth and brayed with delight like a cuddy.

It is highly probable that the sergeant said nothing of the kind and that Andra was rejected for sound medical reasons. But true or not, Andra stuck religiously to his tale and folks who had always thought there was a 'soft bit' about him began to have their doubts.

Then there was the couple of lads from the village who joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (the Angry and Suffering Highlanders as they were known locally). It was Wull who told the story, for he had a great deal of trouble with his pal Dawvit.

They were billeted in wooden huts. There was a fire at the far end of the hut and a clique had commandeered the front seats and Wull and Dawvit had to sit well back in the cold. Dawvit was always a daft reckless kind of a sod. He vowed vengeance on the selfish clique who were monopolising the heat. So one night, coming in from a cold spell of sentry duty, Dawvit went straight up to the fire and, without any warning, threw a handful of cartridges over their heads into the blaze with the casual comment, "That'll maybe shift you's."

The resultant explosion shifted more than the clique, however. It put the fireplace through the wall, nearly brought the roof down and injured (fortunately not seriously) three of the company. Dawvit got his first though by no means his last taste of military discipline.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WAR

My emotions during the war alternated between rebellion and resignation. When I heard of the death of someone I had known and held in boyish affection I was saddened and enraged. Despite all the hectic stirring and inculcating of Hun-hatred I could not see why Scotland should be involved in a bloody death struggle with a nation she knew little or nothing about. I could not accept the official *raison d'être* of the war. I felt in a vague way what Shaw expressed so well afterwards: "Imagine exulting in the death of Beethoven because his murderer was Bill Sykes." And when I knew nothing of Beethoven and almost less of Bill Sykes I could not be expected to enthuse with adolescent patriotic fervour. Especially when the Wallace Monument flanked the outposts of the Ochils.

But there was an inner conflict which I could not resolve: a conflict to which I could not

even give expression. Most of the men and lads I knew and admired were fighting against the Germans. Some of them had died in fighting. Could it be that the Germans were hateful and loathsome: could it be that the Germans were responsible for their deaths (the Germans particularly and not war generally)?

But like many other conflicts this war guilt conflict was not resolved till after I had left Tulliallan. And long before the end of the war a bleak doubt began to gnaw at the hearts of many folk living in the isolation of the countryside. The jingo spirit died in the quite forlorn village streets: it had never been virulent in the woods and the parklands.

In a city a soldier could be killed and only his immediate relatives would grieve for him. But when a man was killed from the parish every one shared to a more or less degree the grief of his relatives. In the country such tragedies bit deeply into the collective conscience. But because that conscience is weak and scattered and easily intimidated, it is relatively impotent as a dynamic of opposition: hence the grey weariness that crept through the parish as the war years dragged on.

As boys we never played at soldiers: we could not play with the conception of death.

The war was a reality we could not dismiss from our thoughts—especially as it dragged to its end. But our sense of its reality was not that of adults. We knew what death was for we saw animals die. We knew what slaughter was like for we had often watched Willie Pettie slaughter a sheep and we had seen deer shot in the forest.

So we knew that war meant death and slaughter. But of the glory of it—or even the sense of it—we could see little. Most of the war propaganda passed over our heads, since it was conceived for adults. The only propaganda we really understood was that war meant death and slaughter for many men and lads we knew.

All this with regard to the war as it took place in France and in the East. The war on the home front had not yet spread to our part of the countryside in dramatic or arresting fashion.

The main facts emerging from this period are that we were not vitally interested in the war; the whole ideological aspect of allied war aims was beyond our comprehension; and the various seats of conflict, the actual theatres of war were utterly foreign to us; that war took away many men from the countryside and that many of them would never return.

There have been too many good Scots who fought in too many wars and never returned.

XI
THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

TWO SHILLINGS A DAY

IN THE AUTUMN of 1917 Mr. Middlemas came to me with a small axe and told me to report to Jimmy Hogg, the forester (successor to John Menzies), at Bordie Moor Loch. He said he had spoken to my mother, that everything was all right and that I was to be on my way immediately. I enquired the nature of the work and was told I would be required to assist in the valuation of the forest timber—but that I would get my instructions from Hogg.

The overseer had met me on the edge of the Gardeners' Wood and I saw no reason why I should not take a minute or two to call on my mother before making for Bordie Moor.

I was all agog with excitement. But Jock, who was with me, was cast down. As my senior he might have been given precedence.

My mother could not tell me much more than Mr. Middlemas—except that I was to be paid two shillings a day, that the job would last for many months and that I was to be exempted from the school since the work was of national necessity and importance.

She had had a long talk with the factor about it for she was loth to see my education interrupted—and she was almost fanatical in her belief in the value of education. "If you've got the scholarship," she would say, "you can gang anywhere." The factor assured her that he was conferring a favour on me as the job would be "a splendid education for the boy." My mother, however, was always suspicious of free favours and she wanted to know why her boy should be selected for the honour. And then he confessed that the forester would have no other boy since I was a good worker and possessed an exceptional knowledge of trees. Finally it seemed that my mother had consented after a thorough analysis of the pros and cons of the proposal.

So, with the small axe in my hand and a piece in my pocket, I set off through the forest to Bordie. It was a fine autumn day, brimming with that slow lazy warmth of the declining summer. The sunshine dripped through the great firs and gathered in yellow pools on the bronze carpet of old pine needles. I was filled with that immemorial ecstasy that throbs like the murmur of drowsy bees in the heart of the forest stillness. Dvořák captured the mood perfectly in the slow movement of his New World Symphony. Mahler and Bruckner suggest it time and again. The opening of Tchaikovsky's Pathetique symphony expresses it with an insight far beyond the power of words, the magic of Shakespeare's not excepted. And yet neither Beethoven (one of the mightiest and most universal spirits of all time) nor Mozart (whose best Bernard Shaw has fittingly described as the only music that would not sound out of place in the mouth of God) have given any expression to the mood and atmosphere of the forest.

But just as the forest mood was taking possession of me I became conscious of a melancholy foreboding. What was the purpose in valuating the trees? It must mean that sooner or later they would fall to the axe. I could hardly imagine such a catastrophe descending on Tulliallan. The thought of Tulliallan without the pine forest was horribly fantastic. I just couldn't bring myself to think of it. It would never come to that: something would intervene: the War would come to an end.

And then for the first time I realised the senseless hell, destruction and futility of war. My gorge rose up against it in a boiling fury. Not for the rivers of human blood that had been drained to the mud of Flanders fields—my perception of that was dim and nightmarish. Not even for the death of gentle-mannered, soft-spoken Calum MacIntyre, the Mulleach, whose name is carved on the War Memorial at Salen, and who was a kennel lad with us. Not for my cousins, James and John, who had barely managed to survive Loos and Hill 70. Not for the many lads whose laughter would never more gladden my heart. Not for anything of flesh and

blood or kith and kin—but for those logs of living wood whose roots were entangled in my environment.

From that moment I looked on the forest as a lover under the sentence of death. It sounds very romantic and not a little ridiculous. But it was too grimly real to have any quixotic sentimentality about it. After all, the forest was the most intimate part of my background. It was the sort of place that should have been preserved for the nation. But we are as a nation so indifferent to trees that societies have had to be formed to preserve their existence. In those days I knew nothing of societies and cared even less. My reactions may have been naïve, indeed they could scarcely be otherwise, but they were genuine natural reactions.

When at last I got to Bordie Moor I found James Hogg sitting with a stranger beside a small loch. Jimmie was an ex-Cameron Highlander who had fought under Garnet Wolseley in the Sudan. He was a grizzled, almost gnarled, old fellow like an ancient solitary thorn. He had a rich burr in his voice, his cheeks were red, and his small pig-like eyes were merry and quizzical and cunning.

He introduced me.

"This is Jimmy, the laddie I was telling ye aboot, Mr. Grant."

"Indeed," said Mr. Grant, who was a Speyside Highlander. "And a fine lad too. So we're all Jamies here?"

"Aye: so we are. Weel, Jimmy here'll tell you ony variety o' tree aboot Tulliallan—and a length o' guid tim'er intae the bargain. Eh, Jimmy?"

I said I would do my best.

"It's fine to hear a lad talking like that," said Grant.

He was a tall spare elderly man with a greyish, indeterminate complexion. He was quiet and courteous in his address. As the conversation proceeded I learned that he represented an official body and that we were to assist him in arriving at a fair and accurate valuation of the timber. He explained briefly what he wanted us to do: how each tree was to be given a mark with the axe to indicate its value, for our work might be checked up.

A HIGHLAND GENTLEMAN

While we were talking, Grant spotted a pair of dragon flies that were coupled on a tuft of heather at his foot. He drew our attention to them casually and then proceeded to expatiate on the copulation of insects. Jimmy Hogg put on a grim non-committal poker-face; and while I was interested I was also embarrassed a little for this was the first time I had ever heard sex discussed on the plane of ordinary conversation. I was to learn from James Grant among many other things that sex could be discussed as impersonally as the weather. But I felt that Jimmy Hogg disapproved. He seemed uneasy and, apart from grunted monosyllables, took no part in the discussions.

I never really knew what they thought of each other. They were polite and deferential. But in personality they were poles apart. James Grant was fastidiously Highland while Jimmy was aggressively Lowland.

Grant was inclined to take things easy. He liked a spell for a smoke now and again. But Jimmy didn't smoke and these occasional rests irked him. The Highlander liked to talk: the Lowlander liked to work.

There were times, however, when Jimmy could loosen his tongue—usually at the midday

break—and tell a grand story. Perhaps long years of military discipline had inculcated in him a regard for duty, while Grant, on the other hand, liked to give the impression that he was a gentleman by birth and disposition and that to work too industriously was a sign of inferior status.

Personally I found the work hard enough. We started at eight in the morning and worked till half-past five, with an official hour's break in the middle of the day. When the walk to and from the house was added, we covered close on thirty miles a day. There were days, of course, when we didn't do more than twenty. But these were in many ways the most arduous days. For our progress would be impeded by undergrowth. Rhododendrons were bad enough: but bracken was worse. There were places where the bracken was almost five feet high and grew so closely together that there were times when we had literally to hack our way through it. When the bracken was wet it could be a thoroughly miserable business for we got soaked through within the first hour.

There were times indeed when I felt like throwing down my axe and going home: I was so weary and wet and miserable. Even the lightest of axes can become burdensome when wielded for hours on end. But Grant was a good psychologist. Just when things were at breaking-point he would call a halt and command me to light a fire. Then we would sit round it and warm ourselves and partly dry our clothes; and Grant would engage in some interesting reminiscences. He even placated Jimmy Hogg. He always made the excuse that he wanted to draw columns in his notebook in which he marked down the various grades and kinds of timber, sharpen his pencils and generally do a little clerical work. He would sometimes make the excuse that his hands were too cold to write properly—and they may well have been. In any case the excuse seemed to mollify Jimmy's conscience.

Sometimes the rain was so heavy and Grant's notebook was so sodden that it was impossible to continue. Then we looked for a spruce tree to shelter under. Grant soon came to appreciate my intimate knowledge of the forest and would say:

"Where's the nearest spruce tree, Jamie?"

Once camped under a spruce and a fire going, we were as sheltered and comfortable as we would have been at home.

I enjoyed those breaks in a wet day more than anything else. The setting satisfied my sense of the adventurous and the romantic: and the tales of Grant and Hogg my sense of the dramatic.

SOLDIER'S TALES

I sometimes thought Jimmy exaggerated his soldier's tales. But a few years later I was able to confirm from photographs in a popular scientific treatise one story that had seemed to me his tallest.

He was telling us about crocodiles on the banks of the Nile—"ugly, treacherous, dirty brutes." They would be lying up on the bank sunning themselves, their mouths open, while small birds hopped along their jaws and pecked their teeth clean. It was a vivid downright picture as Jimmy painted it. But Grant roared with laughter and I could not repress a sceptical smile. But Jimmy, though we didn't know it, was telling no more than the truth. Indeed I think he was much too honest, or deficient in imagination, to dramatise his experiences.

But maybe his tales were the more dramatic for their unconscious art. Jimmy had a bold manly style of narration as rough and grizzled as himself.

He had a great tale about a monkey. During part of his military career in Egypt he was batman to an officer who kept a monkey as a pet. The monkey was the plague of Jimmy's life. The tales he told of it entertained many an hour beneath a dry spruce tree on a wet day.

Jimmy had been instructed not to molest or harm the monkey in any way; and he swore that the monkey understood and took advantage of this.

His first experience of the monkey's diabolical trickery followed the officer's retiral from his room after he had written a letter. When Jimmy entered to carry on with his duties, he found the monkey sitting at the table surrounded with sheets of paper and transferring blobs of ink from the bottle to the paper with the pen. On Jimmy emitting a bellow, it promptly disappeared out the open window.

Its next exploit was more serious. Having washed and hung out his superior's linen, the monkey took the first opportunity to raid the clothes line. In no time it was reported to Jimmy that the monkey was sitting on the roof of the garrison decked out in as much of the washing as it could get on.

After many futile attempts to reach the monkey, Jimmy reported to his officer, who, to Jimmy's disgust, treated the affair as a huge joke. Jimmy thought his sense of humour very peculiar. The officer came out and the monkey climbed down obediently and was given over to Jimmy to strip.

Of course the clothes had to be re-washed. He led the monkey to the wash-house. Since he had been instructed not to chastise the monkey he thought it might be a good idea if he washed the clothes while the monkey was still in them.

"I lifted the damned pest by the back o' the neck an' held him under the water till it had stopped struggling. Bi-damned, I thocht for the minute I had drooned it. But damn the fear! I hauled the claethes aff it and flung it doon on the floor. It lay for a meenit boakin' and splutterin': syne it up and oot the door yitterin' and squealin' like an imp o' Satan.

"But it never forgied me for that. I was doing sentry at the gate the very next day and what if the damned pest didnae climb up on one o' the pillars and mak' its water doon on the tap o' me. But for yae thing an' anither I'd hae put a bullet in it.

"But it didnae stop at that: bi-God, and it didnae. We were drilling in front o' the barracks no' long after. The ranks were nae sooner dressed and we were standing at attention when what if I wasnae melled on the side o' the head wi' a bloody big pomegranate—and there was the bloody monkey cocked on the corner o' the barracks roof yitterin' awa' tae itsel' and girnin' like Auld Nick . . .

"Oh, but ye wouldna meet a cunnin'er damned pest on a day's march than a monkey—the damnedest dirty vermin. You would see them yonder sitting on the back o' the water buffaloes—great hulking brutes wi' muckle horns on them. They wade oot intae the Nile tae cool themselves and get rid o' their vermin—coo lice ye ken. Aye, but the monkeys gae wi' them. In the buffalo goes till just the tap o' his nose is out o' the water. The lice creep up tae the head as the buffalo goes further intae the water. And that's what the monkey kens. He sits yonder, haudin' on till a horn with the yae hand and pickin' lice wi' the other. Many's the hunner I've watched."

Grant was greatly interested in Jimmy's tales of the monkey.

"You would say then, Mr. Hogg, that the monkey has a great amount of intelligence?"

"Oh, bi-God: it's got intelligence."

"Strange, isn't it? There's those that say we're descended from them. And yet they've never been known to speak."

“Speak! Bi-God, they used to say oot there that if the monkey could speak they’d hae put Cameron kilts on them and gied them a rifle.”

“You wouldn’t say now, from what you have seen of them, that there might be any truth in the theory that we are descended from them?”

“God no, Mr. Grant. Damn the fear! Just the same, I often thocht that they were an experiment o’ the Almighty’s that gaed wrang somewhere——Damned, you ken, when you get a bit keek o’ them at times you hae seen worse lookin’ folk—and a hantle sicht mair ignorant.”

But the imp of Grant’s mischief could never be held in abeyance for long.

“There was a monkey escaped from a travelling circus about Inverness way. It got away into one of the remote glens. The good folks there had never seen a monkey before and they had a great argument as to whether it was a MacPherson or a MacMillan . . .”

“Awa’ tae hell,” cried Hogg. “We’ll better get a bend on wi’ they trees.”

HARD WORK

I returned home from a day’s work in the forest so dog-tired that I sometimes fell asleep in the middle of my dinner. And always I staggered off to bed, flung off my clothes and collapsed in sleep.

The work put a big strain on me. I had grown very quickly as a boy. James Grant had thought me “at least fifteen years old” and had protested incredulously when I assured him that I was only “eleven past.” And though I was strong and healthy for my age, I was far from having the stamina of an adult—and above all, my growing body ached for sleep.

Getting twelve hours of sleep on the top of twelve hours of exercise in the open air was, I think, entirely beneficial. Apart from the attendance at church and Sunday school I saw no one and engaged in no other activities during these months. My entire waking hours were spent in the forest.

I said I knew the forest intimately—as intimately perhaps as anyone who had ever lived about Tulliallan. Now I was exploring (almost literally) every square yard of it and laying my small axe to every second tree.

EXPERIENCE

Of course there were many other lessons I learned during those months. I came closer to two strange individuals than had ever been possible before.

There was the question of manner and address. I was deeply impressed by Grant’s manner and bearing: he was unfailingly polite, courteous and gentle-spoken. His reserve gave him a dignity and authority no blustering could have done. And yet beneath all the polished and cultured mannerisms of which the Highlander is a natural master there lurked two unpleasant traits: cunning and insincerity. Grant, I felt instinctively, always acted on the polite English formula: better to be polite than truthful. All this made social intercourse very smooth: but it also made it very shallow. You could never pin Grant down to any definite full-blooded statement. And yet he was a kindly generous man ever ready to lend assistance and give sound advice. I admired and respected him—and yet deep down I did not wholly trust him. Looking back, and thinking of my many good Highland friends, I think he represented the best

qualities of the modern Gael.

James Hogg, on the other hand, was more of my own kind. He spoke in the same idiom. There was nothing polished about him—-nothing mannered or cultured. He was rough, direct and downright. He exemplified the dominant Lowland characteristic: better to be truthful than polite. This does not mean that, where his own interests were concerned, Hogg was incapable of cunning or guile—far from it. But his instinctive approach to any problem or situation was invariably open and direct. He hated lies and cunning and deceit like poison. Though instinctively a boss's man and a disciplinarian, he had a rare independence of judgment. I remember an incident I witnessed with Hogg's superior.

Hogg had been ordered to fell a beech tree at Blackhall. He examined the problem from all angles and decided on the best method of felling. Having made up his mind, he threw off his jacket and vest and proceeded to work with a will.

He hadn't got very far when his superior arrived on the scene. He immediately disapproved of Hogg's plan. Jimmy looked puzzled and angry for a moment. Then he stepped forward:

"Whatever you say. You're the man that's giving the orders here and you're the man to be obeyed. Say the word and I'll put the tree doon exac'ly where you want. Exac'ly where you want."

The desired spot was indicated with a gesture.

"That'll be done! But a damned silly way to fell a tree."

And Jimmy turned on his heel and picked up his axe.

Hogg typified to me the best traits of the Lowlander: independent but dependable; an open friend or an open enemy; dour but not unhumorous. Though my sympathies are all with the Gael, my admiration abides with the Lowland Scot. And there can be no doubt that the basis of this attitude was formed in those forest days.

TYPICAL SCOTS?

Of course there is no such entity as the typical Highlander or the typical Lowlander. Grant, for instance, had an aptitude for bawdry typically un-Highland: there were few things he appeared to relish more than a good bawdy tale. But Hogg had no stomach for bawdry in any form. And though the Gael can relish a platter of smut he rarely takes a hand in the cooking, for the historical conditions that have moulded him since the break-up of the clan system and the consequent peculiarities of his ideology have warped and twisted his more natural spiritual and mental processes. Only in the honest Lowlander does honest bawdry find its champion—open and unashamed. Even Grant was not wholly an exception for his bawdry was never tinged with a sly lechery.

Of course I may be doing the memory of James Hogg an injustice. I rather fancy much of his resentment at Grant's tales was out of consideration for my immature ears.

THE LUMBER CORPS

Before we were through with our valuation, a company or detachment of the Canadian Lumber Corps arrived on the scene and was billeted in the village. So Jock was recruited to assist us in expediting our work. Not that it made a great deal of difference. But with three

voices shouting at Grant it must have sounded more industrious.

The arrival of the Lumber Corps caused a great stir and to-do in the village. They were a mixed lot. There was an odd negro among them and at least a score of Indians.

But I was too tired to take any interest in them when I got home and I resented their presence. I had now accepted the fact, in all its bitterness, that the forest would have to be cut down. But acceptance did not in any way mollify my resentment.

Actually the Lumber Corps was welcomed to the village with wide open arms. The place had become empty and drab as the war had dragged on—a grey eddy in a remote backwash. But now the village folks thought they were in the middle of things with the Lumber Corps. Folks rivalled with each other in inviting the men to their homes for tea and conversation and a degree of general merriment. In no time the girls were getting around with them and enjoying the fun immensely. From every point of view it seemed a splendid thing to have happened. And for a while everything seemed hunky-dory.

They began setting up a sawmill in the middle of the golf course and started laying a light railroad up through the Cuddy Park and along the drives towards the forest.

Some of the golfing fraternity—the village snobocracy for the most part—may have resented this interference with their sporting pleasures. But I heard no complaints. And never once—and this surprised and shocked me—did I hear any murmur or expression of regret for the forest that was about to be no more. No one seemed even remotely interested.

It wasn't long till the first batch of lumbermen arrived in the forest with their paraphernalia of destruction.

We heard they were starting felling behind the Moor Loch the following day. So in the morning Grant, who was intensely interested, and Hogg and I went to see the beginning of the operations.

They lost no time in setting to work. The forest was only so much log to them and the soft, well-tended, mossy drives were only a joke. Their whole attitude seemed derisive and unnecessarily brutal.

Sharp heavy axes began to bite into the trees; saws began ripping and tearing; wedges were tapped into position. The warning call was given and a fine old Scots fir wavered, toppled and crashed to the ground, smashing its arms and tearing the limbs from other trees in its descent. Three others fell in quick succession. A great hole was torn in the tree-tops revealing a cold area of grey-white sky. It required little imagination to envisage the continuation of the destruction and we all turned rather soberly away.

For myself, I felt sick and for long afterwards my senses were quite numb. I had grown up with the forest, had known within it a peace and enjoyed a sense of communion I was never to experience again. The forest had been as vital to my existence as my mother's milk.

It may all have been nothing more than a hypersensitive adolescent emotion which I would have outgrown with the years. Even so—and I do not think it would have been so—its importance cannot be over-stressed in an account of those years and on the significance of their environmental influence.

THE LAST ROUND-UP

The day came, not many weeks afterwards, when the last tree was to be valued.

"Put your mark on that Scots, Jamie," said Grant.

I did so without any ceremony. We were standing on the ridge about the old boat-house on the low bank of the North Loch.

"That's the last tree," said Grant, and closed his book.

"That'll be us finished then?" said Hogg.

"Can we go home now?" I asked Grant.

"If you go home now you'll be losing the half-day."

"To hell wi' that," I replied, bitterness creeping into my voice. "I'm away: ta-ta."

And, swinging my axe in my hand, I went down the slope of the ridge, through the Scots firs, and never saw James Grant again.

FIRST LOVES

My farewell was precipitate. Even Jock was angry with me. He said I had no need to leave Grant like that.

But that was how I had to leave Grant. Otherwise I would have broken down. And neither Grant nor Hogg nor anyone else about Tulliallan would have understood or sympathised.

I knew they didn't care. And because I felt it was natural and inevitable that they shouldn't care I didn't want to argue or protest. What was the use? The trees would be cut down—quickly, ruthlessly, efficiently. I couldn't prevent it.

But I was bitter about it. Bitter and deeply outraged. I had thought of the forest as being mine. I had loved it as a personal possession. I was even jealous of it. And now I had been forced to realise that the forest wasn't mine, that I could do nothing to hold it inviolate against the world.

In the dregs of the bitterness there was a Judas emotion. I had played a principal part in the betrayal of the forest. I should have thrown the axe at Mr. Middlemas and refused to have any part in the dirty work.

I was only a boy, hedged round in a maze of sentimental illusions. But I was working my way out of the maze, was finding the maze disintegrating, withering away, at every step. I was growing up.

Against every action there is reaction. Experience is governed by its own dialectical laws. Against all the bitterness, rage and sorrow there had been happiness, companionship and an invigorating growth of physical and mental experience.

And how deeply I had drunk of physical beauty—as if to sustain me against the long years of industrial hideousness that lay ahead of me.

White morning mists and the great eerie silence of the forest. A silence that vibrated in the heart like the richest cord sustained on the mightiest organ. The trooping timid deer, the blundering capercailzies, the over-coy cooing of the cushat doves syruped in the sweat of pine resin; gaudy unbelievable dragon flies flashing like rainbow spectra against the delirious scent of bog myrtle.

In the heat of the day, at the noon-day rest, in the drowse of autumn. Away back in the forest a mere whisper of air in the tops of the pines. A gentle breath of air whispering in the green pine needles. But gathering, swaying forward, passing overhead in a gentle sigh, the nostalgic breath of history's limitless eons, the echo of God's sigh down the trackless vista of eternity. Passing away and above and beyond: down the forest. But a spiritual agony: a deep quivering exposing of the nostalgic nerve.

The bitter-sweet, pungent, acrid, odoriferous smoke from the pine fire: the altar incense of natural man.

The tin-flavoured taste of cocoa from the reheated metal flask after a ravenous mouthful of scone and cheese.

The wry-tang of rowan berries in the parched mouth of thirst.

The croaking of herons in the black roof of close-set trees. The bronze burnished scales of the great firs in the slanted light of the declining sun; the dusk merging to tangibility in the dark glades where the Beasts of Legend and Superstition and Primal Fear stirred with ancient dread in their Lairs.

The drench and drip and thrust of autumnal rain, lancing through the forest rides, advancing in flurried waves across the clearings and the long neglected fallow lands, seeping through leaves and branches down into the mosses, the bracken, the beds of pine needles and rotting leaf mould, stimulating the dank charnel breath of the mould that had lain dead and rotting for years and yet in decay becoming once more fecund and fertilising . . .

The sights, sounds and smells of the forest lying under the sentence of death. But the forest, like nature, has no knowledge of conscience or morality. Mine was the suffering for mine was the subjectivity.

Perhaps because I knew the source of my pleasure and enjoyment was about to be taken away and forever destroyed, my sight was clearer, my hearing sharper, my sense of smell more acute.

And so in a sense I was grateful for the opportunity of traversing the forest meticulously, rood by rood, square yard by square yard, without circumambient deviation; warning each tree by a homœopathic blow of the fate that followed from the Lumber Corps.

There are other forests: there are other trees. There are other men and other women. But we only love once. And our first love is for ever our last. All else is substitution, replacement and self deception. The new love may at first sight appear brighter and fairer than the old but it does not and cannot endure.

The cedars of Lebanon, the Californian pines, the palms of the tropics . . . to those who loved them first and knew them in the dawn of their experience they will be forever dear.

And so for me the Scots firs of Tulliallan and the spirit of their collectivity, the Forest.

BACK TO SCHOOL

I returned to school unwillingly, feeling big and husky and with a broken voice that sounded gruff as a man’s. For some reason I could not define, Mrs. Paterson seemed rather proud of me. The girls too looked at me with a new interest—adolescent love was astir—for I was now something of a man and, just beating Willie Russell, was the biggest boy in the class.

But I was still somewhat embittered and did not, at first, enjoy myself.

The felling continued apace. But the popularity of the Lumber Corps was fading in certain quarters. Uniform tends to abolish evidence of class and social position, and many men were enjoying social intercourse with people who would not have recognised them in civil life. This was brought very sharply to the village intelligence when engagements were intimated between local girls and Canadians and the engagements had to be broken off when the mothers discovered from the officers that many of the engaged men were already married with wives “back home.”

RED INDIANS

The Indians interested me. Having read *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hudson Bay*, I had some idea of what North American Indians looked like. I saw them at a Church Parade one Sunday and a more dispirited and cowed bunch of physical degenerates I had never seen. Few of them understood any English: some had a smattering of Canadian French. They were obviously unhappy and lonely and the fact that they were completely ostracised from village life did not help them any.

I often wondered what were the thoughts—if any—of the Reverend John MacLaren as he preached to them. But very possibly the Reverend John did not allow his mind to probe where his thoughts could not follow.

Even at that early age I wondered how it was that we could sing: "The blood of Jesus murmurs Peace within" when the Germans were also supposed to be Christians. And I wondered in a naïve way whether there were any churches still left in Germany and whether people still held services and had ministers of religion. I was not to know that all the pulpits of the contending forces were eloquent with pious prayers and fervent supplications to the Almighty.

But when I did come to know this I remembered John MacLaren and the pathetic Indians and the memory became full of significance.

It is a stupid and criminally dangerous practice to teach children falsehoods. For when the child grows up and discovers the truth he is apt to throw the baby out with the dirty bath water. Ruling classes, despots, tyrants and dictators may think they can corrupt children's minds with their manufactures to suit their own ends. And so they can. But only up to a point and only at an incalculable cost. For unless they can continue the lying propaganda and the coercive apparatus that maintains it working efficiently from the cradle to the grave—and unless they can maintain a stabilised economy to support this—then their day of reckoning will come upon them like an unleashed and ungovernable fury.

TREES INTO TIMBER

Sometimes I went along to the Cuddy Park and watched the little pug engine bring down its load of logs to the sawmill.

I met Jimmy Hogg there one day. We watched a load pass.

"What d'you think o' it, Mr. Hogg?"

"I've stopped thinking about it: they're only making a bloody hash o' things. The waste o' guid timber down in that sawmill is a crying sin. But dinnae you worry, Jimmy: there'll be a price to pay for a' this and the war's no' feenished yet."

"To hell wi' the war!" I replied, for I was by now sick hearing about it.

"I wouldn't say that: maybe the Germans'll be ower here yet and frighten sense into some folk."

As this was a probability I could not entertain—I had been well trained regarding the ultimate invincibility of the allies—I made no reply. But as I was of the opinion that the Germans couldn't have wrought more destruction than the Canadians had done around Tulliallan, I wasn't much interested either way.

I realised from an elderly lumberman who sometimes came for tea and a talk with my parents

—I think he had been born in Galloway—that Tulliallan was only a joke to the Canadians. I had seen pictures of Canadian Forests and Canadian Lumber Camps. Certainly Tulliallan with its cabbage patch of old firs and its couple of water holes must have been more of an insult to them. I didn't blame them and I didn't really resent them. If Tulliallan meant as little to them as Canada meant to me we were quits. What I did resent and resent bitterly and deeply was the senseless destruction of what was in a very deep and real sense my native home. To my parents Tulliallan meant nothing more than just another place at which they could earn bread and butter in their journey through life. Their native home was Galloway and the love they bore it must have been very real for they never ceased to talk about it.

My father had worked a lot in the forest when John Menzies had been head forester, and I knew he had a love for it. Indeed he responded very deeply to natural beauty. But it just wasn't home and I was not to know then just how many were the bitter memories Tulliallan held for him. I didn't even know then that he felt his stay there could not continue much longer. I was much too young to appreciate fully the significance of my parents' many problems.

No: my bitterness was directed mainly against the war. I blamed the war for everything and the English, not the Germans, for being responsible for it. In any case my juvenile and exacerbated nationalism fed on the belief that it was Scotland who had to fight England's battles and generally do all their dirty work.

The vulgarist national chauvinism would have found me a perfervid recruit at this time.

I am well aware that my reactions to the felling of the Tulliallan Forest will appear the most sentimental drivelling to many worthy people whose penny in the slot reactions to their environment is one of the sad things about humanity.

A tough he-man critic in the *Glasgow Socialist Star* reviewing *The World His Pillow* wrote: ". . . think of it—depopulating the forests of wood. Trees—mushrooms and cobwebs—fungus in a beer cellar—shed a tear for them and you have a soul!" You get the drift unmistakably even if the meaning eludes you.

I was too young to know what the actual horror, blood and muck of the war meant. But I was not too young to mourn the loss of men—fine fellows I had known—such as Calum MacIntyre. But the useless massacre of the trees did more to open my eyes to the savage anarchy of modern society and the overwhelming ghastliness of modern war than any theoretical formulations.

But had I known of the Glasgow slums, had I hated them with half the intensity I loved the trees, I would have hacked them down myself, if the timber would have helped to rehouse the slum-dwellers decently.

A tree takes a long time to grow. But it can beautify the earth for a hundred years. No man has the right to cut them down wantonly or selfishly, or without taking steps to replace their loss.

The Americans have had to pay a terrible price in human lives for denuding the Mississippi valleys—and the valleys of the main tributaries—of their timber. Nor has the full total of the colossal price yet been paid.

Viewed in the light of the devastation and destruction of the First World War, the obliteration of the belt of trees comprising the forest is unworthy of a moment's consideration. It is only in relation to the life of a small boy that the loss was overwhelming and only in relation to the subsequent consequences, mainly of an ideological nature, can the loss be considered of any importance.

XII
FAREWELL

DEATH OF A CHIEF

SIR JAMES SIEVEWRIGHT had been in Germany (or Austria) when war was declared and he had promptly been interned.

Some said he had suffered a lot as the result of his treatment then: others hinted at pro-German sympathies as accounting for his release.

When he died, not long after his return to Tulliallan, the general opinion was that his death had been hastened in some manner or other by his internment.

As I had little or no interest in Sir James Sievewright—although he had condescended to address me on a few occasions—I was not in any way moved by his death. He had always been a shadowy figure in the background of my estate life—much like God or the King in *their* respective spheres.

His death was the occasion of much unconscious merriment. Many of the estate folks began to count on the legacy that would be left them in the will—and many had already planned the spending of it.

Everywhere black ties were in evidence. As my father did not work in a tie he was spared unnecessary hypocrisy. Many people who had never liked Sievewright and who had always referred to him derisively now began to speak of him in voices charged with emotion and showing visible signs of distress. My mother, who had little patience for hypocrisy and whose sympathy lay with Lady Sievewright, twitted the pious mourners unmercifully. She was quite certain Sievewright wouldn't leave her any of his money and she said so openly. Not that she bore him any grudge: indeed the relationship between them was most cordial. But she had no financial illusions about any regard Sievewright might have had for her.

Most of the estate folks, however, remained steadfast to their faith in an impending windfall.

When it was announced that Sievewright was being cremated, there was a moment of doubt. Cremation was generally considered a major heresy. And it was wondered if a man who could allow his body to be burned might not be equally unorthodox in regard to his will.

On top of the disturbing news of Sievewright's cremation came the more disturbing news about the place of burial.

Where he might have been buried no one cared to speculate. But when it was announced that Sievewright had willed to be buried on a knowe in one of the remoter fields there was consternation.

What could possess a man to wish to be buried in such a place? True, the knowe commanded a good view. But was there anyone about Tulliallan who attached any importance to a good view? And in any case, what was the importance of a good view to a dead man whose body had been burned?

The Tulliallan folks began to have grave doubts about their Laird's orthodoxy and speculation and gossip assumed the most fantastic shape. Rumours and counter-rumours were bandied about.

Once again Geordie Fyfe, with classical irrelevance, appeared on the scene. So far, attempts at digging the grave had proved abortive owing to the presence of rock and stone. Geordie was sent for and given the job. He was jubilant. When he met anyone he opened the conversation with: "Have you heard o' my promotion? I'm now Sir James's grave-digger!"

And he would laugh loudly and derisively. The hypocritical mourners were scandalised and outraged. Such blasphemy was unheard of. But the more they appeared outraged the more Geordie exulted.

And, where others had failed at the grave-digging, Geordie succeeded—though just in the nick of the scheduled time.

I had no idea who organised the funeral arrangements. But, as school children, we were marshalled on either side of the drive going west from the Castle.

We had to stand very solemnly at attention and when the cortege passed we were to bow our heads—in grief, respect or remembrance. I am sorry now that I was foolish enough to obey Johnny Weir's instructions so faithfully. With bowed head and closed eyes I missed much of the detail of the proceedings.

But I remember the pipers and the tune they played vividly.

The cortege was preceded by the pipes and drums of the Queen Victoria Institute at Dunblane for the orphans of men who had served the colours.

They commenced with *Lord Lovat's Lament*, and played it very impressively: cold shivers went up and down my spine. Their deportment too was stately and dignified and altogether they made a brave and imposing show.

Slowly the procession filed past the lines of school children. After it was well down the drive we were dismissed. As far as we were concerned the great owner of Tulliallan estate (and for all I knew or cared possibly a benefactor of Tulliallan Parish) had passed to his final resting place.

But it was a good mile to the grave at the top of the grassy knowe in the park beyond the ancient graveyard of Allerton.

The coffin was carried in turns by the estate workers till the grave was reached. But what service, if any, was held there, I am unable to record.

But on the Sunday when the village paid the grave a visit they were startled (many of them were genuinely shocked) by a crude notice displayed on the fence:

After passing through the flames
Here lie the ashes of Sir James.

The author of this couplet (or the perpetrator of the outrage) had obviously not been taken in by the organised solemnity of the occasion.

But then I have never been able to convince myself of the sincerity of people who make elaborate preparations for their burial. I can think of not a few lairds and landed proprietors in a big way who have lived their lives in luxurious mansions and fed on the fat of the land and who would not have deigned to travel in anything short of a limousine—especially in their journeys to and from the House of God—who have chosen to be carried to their graves in a humble farm-cart.

Sir James Sievewright would not have allowed an estate worker to have broken bread at his table. Yet he so ordered things that they should carry his ashes to the grave. The significance of the gesture remains, for me, strange and inexplicable.

I did not know that the death of Sievewright was the end of my Tulliallan days. His widow disputed certain terms of the will. In the line up of forces that ensued between Lady Sievewright and the Trustees my parents allied themselves to the widow.

In the end the Trustees won the day. I am certain that it would have made little difference had the decision been otherwise.

But whatever the pros and cons of the situation were (they are irrelevant to these pages) my parents and the Trustees decided to part company.

There were of course no legacies; and as soon as this was known the black ties were

immediately discarded and much ill was spoken of the dead.

FATEFUL NEWS

When I knew we had to leave Tulliallan I was so dismayed that I went about in a sickening daze. But when the news was broken to me that we were going to Glasgow, my dismay was deepened into the darkest forebodings of horror.

I heard the sentence as a prisoner must hear the sentence of life imprisonment.

I loathed Glasgow. It was almost unbearable to think I would be shut off forever from green fields and woods, from lochs and streams, from byres and stables, from all that Tulliallan and life in the country meant to me.

Folks said I would soon get used to it. But it took many years to do that and the first years were physically and spiritually devastating.

I had never warmed to Kincardine and had never spent a moment longer in its quiet streets than the strictest necessity dictated. I was shy to a morbid degree. The presence of strange people was a physical pain: the mere thought of a crowd filled me with the most paralysing dread. I would have done almost anything to have avoided a crowd of people numbering more than a score. When I thought of Glasgow and its teeming million, such a fear and dread consumed me that I almost became physically ill.

It was not that I was in any way misanthropic. I liked company. But a crowd, people in the mass, constituted an objective phenomenon I could not comprehend. I could not bear the thought of mingling with thousands of human beings who must be, so I imagined, completely alien and perhaps antagonistic to me. And to live in a street, twenty-four hours every day, with strange people as immediate neighbours, seemed cruel and indeed revolting. I knew I was morbidly shy: I knew only too well what my shyness had already caused me in nervous suffering. Sometimes I consoled myself with the thought that I was exaggerating the potential horror of Glasgow. But I could never deceive myself for long. I knew in my blood and bones that I would never take to Glasgow and that were I to continue living there, adjustment to the new environment would be long and painful.

But while the dread of Glasgow leadened my stomach, there remained a few days in which to bid farewell to the individual aspects of Tulliallan. There was pain in the parting—but in the bitterness, the remorse, the adolescent agony, there was a deep emotional satisfaction. The emotion aroused was as old as the heart of man. We catch the refrain over and over again in the pages of the Old Testament: it has inspired the most beautiful melodies of the world's folk-song.

There is no country richer in folk-song than Scotland; and her bagpipe music—still regrettably a closed book to music lovers—is rich to overflowing with Farewells and compositions singing the praises of countless spots, through birth and circumstance, "beloved over all." There was nothing unique about my relationship to my immediate physical universe. There was nothing abnormal in the sorrow I felt in parting from it. Even though I had been born elsewhere it was the land of my birth—though, spiritually, Galloway was deeply entwined in it. It was my particular Fiunary, the Lochaber that was about to be no more. The cedars of its Lebanon were gone, but the Wells of its Bethsheba were not dried up. Till death would come and blot out all memory; across the vast plain of time it seemed to me then I would have to transverse, Tulliallan would remain, vivid and dear and deeply nostalgic: *Mo Dhachaigh*, My

Home.

All this I knew with the acuteness and sharpness given only to adolescent experience. I was so free from any kind of responsibility that my whole emotional being was given over to the response. I had not to worry about earning a living: nor worry about food or clothing or shelter. I was free to wallow in my emotional subjectivity.

My school-days were almost at an end and I did wonder what I would work at. I thought about engineering—especially electrical engineering about which there seemed an atmosphere of magic and mystery—but not with any great enthusiasm. Of one thing at least I was firmly resolved: nothing would induce me to have anything to do with clerical work. A simple addition sum was apt to produce such a nervous reaction as to paralyse my concentration beyond three figures.

I disliked figures and calculations that meant nothing in themselves. A job like Peter the clerk's seemed to me the least attractive of any of the jobs I could think of. And I still agree with the dictum that of all the damnable wastes of human life and energy clerking is the worst. Mercifully, I was not to have any premonition of the toils of accountancy, Profit and Loss Accounts, Balance Sheets and the endless convolutions of actuarial science that were soon to be thrown round me.

As for school in Glasgow, I succeeded fortunately in being able not to dwell on it too deeply. And I was not to know that under Mr. Weir the standard of education at Tulliallan Parish School was in advance of anything Glasgow had to offer at the corresponding level.

Nor was I to know of the prejudice and the silly snobbery of the Old School Tie. We were such honest barbarians at Tulliallan we didn't know there were scholars who wore ties.

No: Glasgow with its future of Engineering, Drawing, Trigonometry, Latin, Shorthand, Book-keeping, Business Methods (and a dozen other weird and wonderful mysteries for which my imagination had never yearned and for which my mind had apparently not the slightest aptitude) remained in the middle distance of my immediate perspective as a vast smoking hell seething with damned and tortured souls.

PREPARATIONS FOR A JOURNEY

The preparations for the momentous and, it seemed, calamitous flitting proceeded apace. My father knocked up packing cases and went about the task of packing china and all fragile and breakable articles with a scientific thoroughness that would have taken them safely to Pernambuco. But it seemed that experience of previous flittings had taught him lessons he had no intention of disregarding.

My mother concentrated on the food problem. We knew little or nothing about food cards and rationing at Tulliallan. But it seemed that rationing and food cards were all the go in Glasgow. She had no intention that we should starve.

The hens were a fond and profitable possession. That she couldn't take them to Glasgow was a sore point. She sold many of them; but prices weren't too good. So she hit on the plan of part roasting one or two of them every day and wrapping them securely in grease-proof paper. The rich and appetising odour of roasting fowls filled the house and induced the daughter of our neighbour to sniff the air and say: "There's a grand smell coming frae somebody's house; but I'm sure it's no' frae ours!"

But her foresight did not end with fowl roasting, great as the blessing of that foresight was

to prove. She salted and packed an enormous crock with butter and preserved a gross of selected eggs. Had it been possible she would also have packed a cart of potatoes and a couple of hundredweights of turnips.

My father had to insist, almost driven to frantic despair, that there was a limit to what we could take with us. But she was not easily dissuaded. She fought to have every odd space in the packing boxes crammed with provisions of some kind—endless pots of jams and jellies, packages of sugar, flour, lentils and a side of bacon. Had there been any way of preserving milk, she would have taken nothing less than a month's supply.

The fate of the garden tools provided the most ridiculous argument. My mother had the good peasant habit of refusing to destroy or part with anything that might in almost any conceivable set of circumstances prove useful. When in doubt it was better to keep the debated article for seven years—by which time it was almost certain that some use would be found for it.

My father, in mild exasperation, pointed out that rakes, spades, trowels, forks, riddles, dibblers and the like would be useless in a Glasgow tenement. But mother was not to be convinced that we would always be in Glasgow. Indeed, I think that was the great hope that sustained her against the frightful sacrifices she must have known the city would demand from her. She would not bring herself to admit that Glasgow was to be the end of her Scottish pilgrimage.

What my father thought I do not know. Glasgow was to demand from him sacrifices, to call from him such resources of endurance and courage, as he could not possibly have foreseen. Yet he must have had some approximate idea of what the future held for him. Whether or not he hoped, then, that he would some day go back to the country and all its customs and habits of which he was so much a part, I can only hazard a guess. His immediate problem was to organise the flitting, and as this was already beginning to prove almost insuperable he would not hear of any gardening tools being taken.

For myself, I found that my own possessions were treated with a brutal utilitarianism. I had many odds and ends, which, while of little or no intrinsic worth, I had preserved like sacred fetishes.

There was a Scout's waterbottle given to me by Professor Christie. It was a glass bottle encased in a felt substance and slung on a thin leather strap. Someone had ripped off the strap and covering and filled the bottle with embrocation.

The elephant with the moth-eaten holes and the red-coats had been burned in one of the daily bonfires. Coloured reins, tops, slings (with much reserve of golf ball elastic), bows and arrows, minnow nets and many other intimate relics had also been devoured in the flames. But at least they had been destroyed in my absence. And I could do no more than mourn, with a touch of acquiescent but wistful regret, the inevitableness of *fait accompli*.

No member of the family, however, as much as laid a hand on the two large boxes in which the treasured collection of eggs reposed in their bran packing. They knew how much I prized them and they guessed something of the long indefatigable hours of searching that had gone to their collecting. (They were to survive another couple of flittings before I parted with them to an English schoolmaster.)

I might have assisted with the flitting more than I did. But my father sensed how much Tulliallan meant to me and he did not encroach on my limited time. As soon as I got home from school I ate a scone or a pancake and went out on another round of farewells.

I had already gone over every rood of the forest at the valuation. But the smaller woods and

plantings, the burns and fields; all the buildings and out-houses in and around Blackhall had to be paid a last visit. I wanted to make certain that I would carry with me a clear mind-picture of every scene, prospect and interior. I went about this deliberately and with calculation.

My constant school companion, Willie Russell, was as heartbroken as I was at the thought of separation. We promised we would write each other regularly.

The relationship between Jock and I was different: we would never have thought of writing each other. Yet in some ways my relationship with Jock was more intimate. For one thing, we shared Tulliallan together—and shared it silently.

I slept with Jock the last night I spent in Tulliallan. Our bedding had all been packed and sent off that day so as to coincide with our arrival in Glasgow.

Strangely enough we were in a gay mood—hiding our real feelings behind all excess of nervous tension.

The sun came up that May morning with every glint and glimmer and sparkle of traditional freshness. June was at hand and every bud and blade and leaf was virginal in its green and young in its freshness. It was indeed the May morn of the poet's immemorial dream.

I had longed for rain and a heavy sky for I had wanted a veil to be drawn over the parting scene. But nature had staged the parting in the full glory of her magnificence. And in so doing she proved her utter disregard for human wishes. The trees would burst in leaf and the birds would sing, even were mankind to vanish from the earth. How fondly I had imagined myself close to nature: how silly had been my identification with nature. Nature remained vast and impersonal, kind, cruel and capricious. Man with his mind, with all his attributes of thought, reasoning and speculation, remained apart. Maybe in that distant Golden Age of the Diffusionists' dream the relationship had been different. But the relationship between man and nature had altered just as the relationship between man and man had altered. For man no longer moved in harmony with nature but in accord with the divisions he had occasioned in himself. Or otherwise my parents would never have been driven out of Galloway nor travelled Scotland at the dictates of economic necessity, the operations of wage slavery and the machinations, often blind and capricious, of those who ordered so much in their destiny.

And yet the beauty of that May morn remains with me when much else is forgotten or but dimly remembered.

SINGLE TICKETS

We said good-bye to our neighbours and some tears were shed; for while isolation of country life can breed the blackest of hatreds and the most poisonous of animosities it can also bring to flower the rarest of friendships. Outwardly my parting with Jock was casual, indeed perfunctory. We knew how we felt; and we were never the ones to put words on emotions.

Then we bustled into the cab and drove off to Kilbagie station. The trees in the Blackhall wood swung past; the big elm; the big horse chestnut at the corner where we turned down Blelochs Brae.

In a few minutes we were spanking along the Alloa road. I sat in the corner of the cab, my face turned to the window, and watched with bitter, almost angry resignation the parklands of Tulliallan slip past. I looked up through the parks, whose every tuft was familiar, let my gaze linger along the course of the minnow burn, and above the burn where the trees and the plantings obscured the rising ground towards Windyhill; lingered for a moment on a fluttering

hawk before it swooped, and wondered if I would ever again watch a hawk flutter and swoop, the throat caught faintly with fear and fascination.

And then we were passing Broomknowes and the cottage that had once been Calum Finlay's (whose garden in summer looked as if it had been clipped from a corner of Eden); past the road that led through the paper mill to the Garlet and Willie Russell. And then on to Kilbagie station. Ahead, through the trees, the green Ochils heaped and folded and crumpled in the still splendour of the morning; ancient and kindly and touching like men who have grown very old labouring on the soil: all gauntness, sternness and foreboding worn smoothly away by the hand of time.

The green Ochils that had framed the picture that was Tulliallan; that had been the ultimate boundary to a small boy's world.

The green hills had always seemed far away. Dumyat, Ben Cleuch, Ben Shee; the Hills of Skythorn, Tarmangie and Whitewisp; Craigentaggart Hill, Colsnaur Hill, Sauchenwood Hill; and the Hills of Mellock, Lendrick and Innerdonny . . .

And now sitting in a railway carriage and watching them slowly revolve and slip behind and out of vision as the train gathered speed on the first stage of the journey towards the city—the significance of which lay in the single tickets my father held loosely in a limp hand that rested on his knee.

There never is any return. For the individual, life is a single ticket journey towards the final terminus of the grave.

I had completed the first stage of that journey. I was no longer a child. I had completed the journey through the heaven that environed my childhood when the green hills had seemed far away.

The eyes had strengthened, the green hills had come into perspective; they had rounded and framed that perspective with a perfect harmony.

They might have mellowed and dimmed and receded in the fullness of time and faded-out in the span of the Psalmist's three score and ten.

The order of circumstance was to necessitate otherwise. They were to fling away from a railway carriage window even as I raised the eyes of youth. Venice and Naples and Rome I would see you before I die. Nijny-Novgorod, Yasnaya Polyana, Magnitostroi . . . The thread of continuity once broken is forever lost. But no one knows what revenges the whirligig of time may bring. History repeats itself: once as tragedy and once as farce. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Only the sick at heart look over Jordan. Beyond the green hills sterner mountains raise their heads: History hustles her horses . . .

The Green Hills were swinging past. Loosely, in a limp hand that rested on his knee, my father held the single tickets for the journey. The boundaries of my world were being breached.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Obvious printer errors have been corrected including Table of Contents improper pagination and chapter order.

All spelling and punctuation retained as written. Author uses the older term ‘Sasunnach’ versus the more current Scottish Gaelic ‘Sassenach’ for “Saxon”.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *The Green Hills Far Away* by James William Barke]